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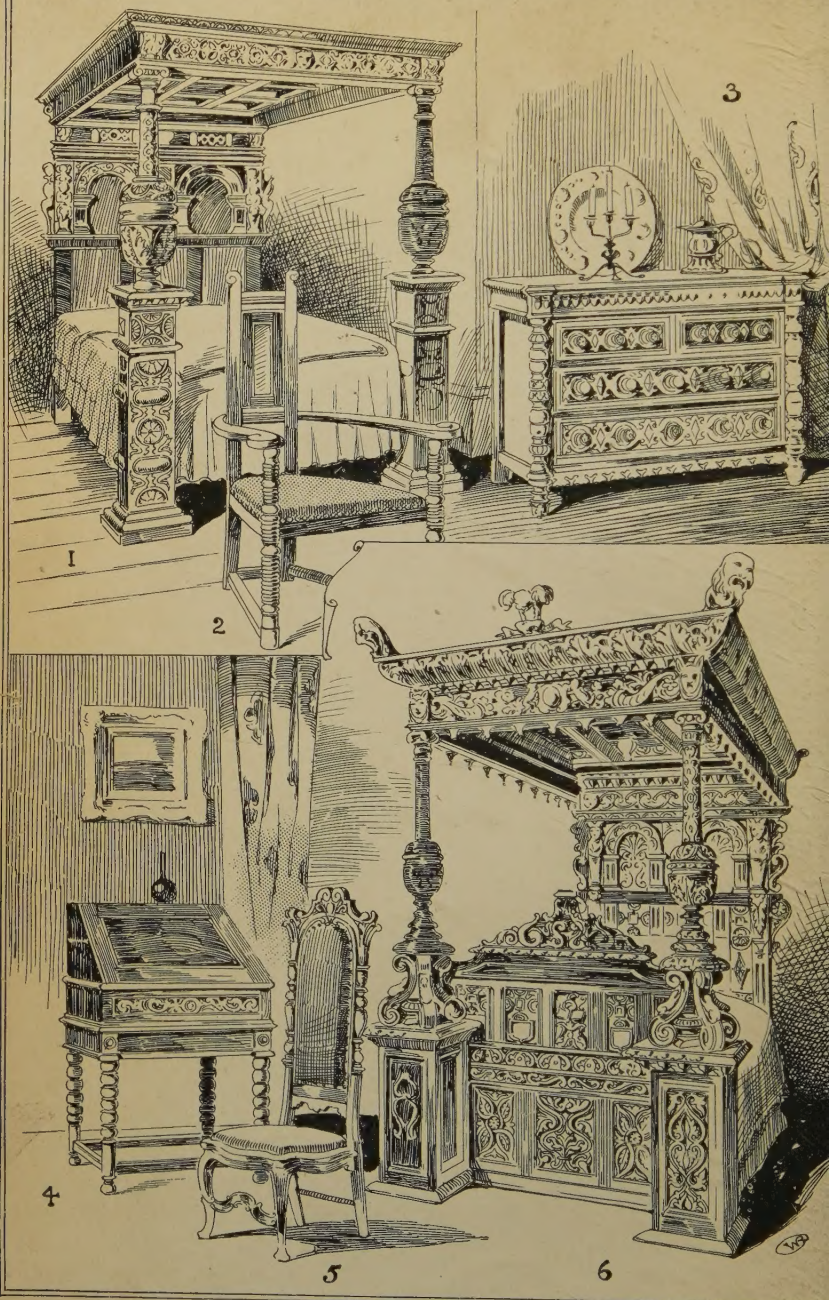


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# STYLE IN FURNITURE

BY

R. DAVIS BENN

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY W. C. BALDOCK

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39 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON
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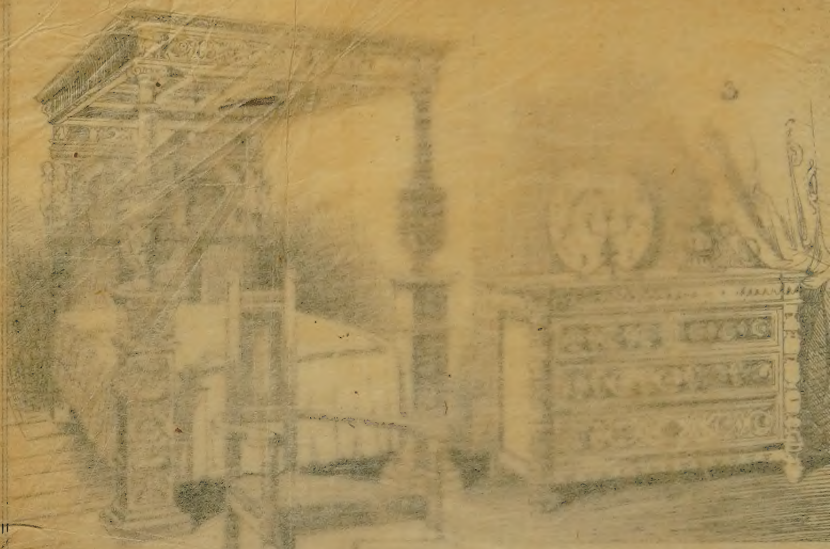


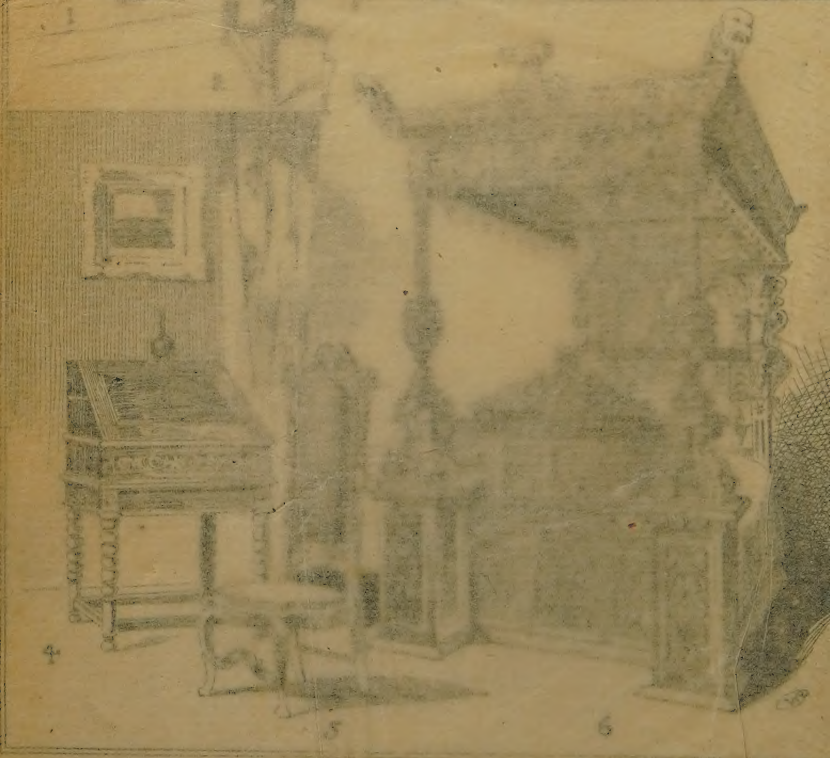


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TO MY WIFE
Beatrice,

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# PREFACE

THE following pages have been written with two distinct aims in view. In the first place, it has been my endeavour to treat my subject in such a vein as to render the text interesting to those who may wish to acquire sufficiently accurate knowledge of old English and some French furniture in order that they may be able to distinguish one style from another, to apportion each to its proper period, and to learn something of the history of all, without entering upon a very deep study of the questions involved. For inquirers of this class, I trust that my general remarks in each chapter will afford the necessary information.

For the non-technical reader, therefore, I have striven to connect the various styles with great political and social changes, so as to impress them the more clearly upon their minds; at the same time an effort has been made to refresh the memory respecting those leaders in art and literature of different ages, whose names are venerated by all, and who, in their day, were unquestionably surrounded in their home life by such household gods as those depicted. By adopting this course, I have hoped to enable those who follow my thoughts to people with familiar friends the interiors which they will furnish in imagination from the store of examples set at their disposal. Though those friends have long since entered into "the great unknowable," we cannot help sometimes fancying that they are still with us in the flesh, holding friendly converse in our midst.

I have attempted also to demonstrate the fact that domestic furnishing, and particularly that of the past, may really be regarded as an outward and visible expression of the spirit underlying all national life; how far success has attended my efforts in that direction must be left for others to decide.

The requirements of the genuine student are far too exacting to be satisfied with mere generalisation, and they, of course, have had to be borne constantly in mind. That being so, I have, so far as considerations of space have permitted, traced the immediate origin of each style; followed its development; analysed it; instituted all essential comparisons between one style and another; classified characteristics; recorded the names, and, in some cases, briefly sketched the careers of leading designers and makers; and, as far as lay within my power, have discussed at length every point of importance connected with the subject. If any reader, therefore, has to decide the question whether a chair be "Jacobean" or "Queen-Anne"; whether a "cabriole" be French or "Chippendale"; to distinguish between a "Heppelwhite" and a "Sheraton" tracery; to account conclusively for the character of any style; or to solve any other of the numerous problems which are constantly being encountered by the professional worker, I sincerely trust that material assistance will be afforded by these pages.

If anyone derive from the perusal of this work one-thousandth part of the pleasure that has been associated with its preparation, my labours will not have been in vain.

In conclusion, I must acknowledge my personal indebtedness to Mr. W. C. Baldock for the loving care with which he has accomplished the work of illustration—a colossal task in itself—rendering the examples with almost photographic accuracy, and yet with an artistry that can never be the dower of any camera or sensitive plate, however perfect they may be. I am also under obligation to the proprietors of *The Cabinet Maker and Art Furnisher* for the right to repro-

duce a number of illustrations from the pen of Mr. Baldock, which have appeared in the pages of that journal, but which, as it is a publication strictly confined to trade circles, have not come under the eye of the public.

R. DAVIS BENN.

4 VICARAGE MANSIONS,
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# INTRODUCTION

It is not the pretension of this work, as will be understood when its dimensions are remarked, to provide a complete and exhaustive history of furniture, but simply to convey a knowledge of those national types that are still to be met with, in original form, in the auction sale-rooms, the dealers' shops, the country cottage, or the old family mansion; and which are being perpetuated even to-day by the labours of the designer who draws upon time-honoured sources for inspiration. The study of our domestic furnishing as it was prior to the end of the sixteenth century belongs rather to the field of remote antiquarian research, which interests but comparatively few people, and, on that account, has not been included in the present volume.

I have commenced, therefore, with furniture which was more or less common in the homes of this country at the time when James the First ascended the throne, and have continued by dealing with every style that has won favour here since that time; discussing each as fully as possible under the circumstances. It has, of course, been altogether out of the question to illustrate every old piece available, for their number is far too great to permit of inclusion in a single volume, unless that volume be of truly Gargantuan proportions; but thoroughly characteristic examples of the various phases of all the styles selected have been presented, and dealt with so exhaustively that a knowledge of them will be sufficient to enable the student to pass judgment on all others partaking in any degree of the nature of those styles.

As the French modes of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and of the earlier years of the nineteenth, influenced our own very strongly, those modes also have been duly considered, in order that the relationship subsisting between the art and craftsmanship of the two countries may be clearly traced. The development also of "L'Art Nouveau" in France has been accorded a considerable share of attention, as I hold that it marks a movement of the greatest significance and importance, not to France alone, but to the art-workers of all countries.

Finally, though it has not been my intention to deal at any length with modern productions, some explanations have been proffered to account for the character of much of the furniture now being designed and manufactured in this country, and to which the style-and-title "Quaint" has been accorded. For the rest, I trust that the book will prove to be self-explanatory.

# A TABLE OF DATES

## ENGLAND.

| Sovereign. | | Style. |
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## FRANCE.

| Sovereign. | | Style. |
|---|---|---|
| Francis I., | 1515 to 1547. | "François-Premier." |
| Henry II., | 1547 to 1559. | "Henri-Deux." |
| Francis II., | 1559 to 1560 | |
| Charles IX., | 1560 to 1574 | |
| Henry III., | 1574 to 1589 | |
| Henry IV., | 1589 to 1610. | "Henri-Quatre." |
| Louis XIII., | 1610 to 1643. | "Louis-Treize." |
| Louis XIV., | 1643 to 1715. | "Louis-Quatorze." |

| ENGLAND. | | | FRANCE. | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Sovereign. | | Style. | Sovereign. | | Style. |
| George I., | 1714 to 1727. | | Louis XV., | 1715 to 1774. | "Louis-Quinze." |
| George II., | 1727 to 1760. | Chippendale's Book published 1754. | | | |
| George III., | 1760 to 1820. | Heppelwhite's Book published 1789. Sheraton's Book published 1791. Debased "Empire." | Louis XVI., | 1774 to 1793. | "Louis-Seize." |
| | | | Napoleon | 1799 to 1814. | "Empire." |
| George IV., | 1820 to 1830. | | | | |
| William IV., | 1830 to 1837. | | | | |
| Victoria. | | | | | |

# STYLE IN FURNITURE

## THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

### INTRODUCTORY

THE task of tracing, identifying, arranging in chronological order, and placing on record the scattered fragments now available of the history of such English furniture and woodwork as was designed and manufactured prior to the commencement of the seventeenth century, is, for many reasons, beset with difficulties; indeed, it is greatly to be feared that the story, in absolute entirety, will never be told, for the requisite material upon which to base it is no longer available. In the first place, the cabinet makers of the earlier times did not cultivate the practice of publishing design books, or illustrated sheets; if they did, none has survived to tell the tale. Later on, when we arrive at the "Chippendale" period, all is delightfully plain sailing for the historian, but when dealing with work of an earlier date we have to grope about, so to speak, in greater or less obscurity; piecing together as well as may be fragments of the story gathered here and there, so far as circumstances will permit, in order to arrive at an approach to the truth, and be in a position to form a fairly just estimate of the whole. These fragments are comparatively few and far between, particularly when we get back to the reign of Elizabeth —as is, of course, only natural; for it needs good craftsmanship indeed to survive the wear and tear of over three centuries. Yet, to the lasting credit of the old woodworkers be it

said, much not only has remained even to the present day, but still appears to be "good" for a few centuries more. Only the "fittest," of course, has survived. This aspect of the question must be emphasised, as not a few people seem to lose sight of the fact altogether, and draw erroneous conclusions, which they express loudly, in consequence. Critics from whom better things might reasonably be expected are frequently heard comparing the work of the so-called "good old days" with that of the modern craftsman, greatly to the disparagement of the latter.

The favourite plan adopted by these "superior" people is, in the first place, to take some of the masterpieces of days gone by, upon the execution of which neither loving labour nor expense was spared, and place them side by side with commercial productions of the present day, designed and made under modern conditions, and for a totally inadequate rate of remuneration. Having done this, they wag their heads, and enquire:—"Where is your modern craftsman now?" Personally I think that he comes out of the comparison very brilliantly indeed. If the greatly-belauded cabinet maker of the sixteenth, seventeenth, or even eighteenth century were placed in the position of his twentieth-century successor, compelled to "cut prices," as the trade term it, and to hold his own against the keenest competition on every hand, which will allow him but the barest living; what would be the result?

In the name of all that is just and fair, let us be honest enough to look the situation squarely in the face. As a matter of fact, I have no hesitation in contending that many a piece of furniture which may be purchased nowadays for a few sovereigns in the showrooms of, shall I say, the much-abused and extensively patronised Tottenham Court Road, is in very truth, considering the money expended, of far greater value than some of the most beautiful and costly creations of earlier times. And let it be recognised and

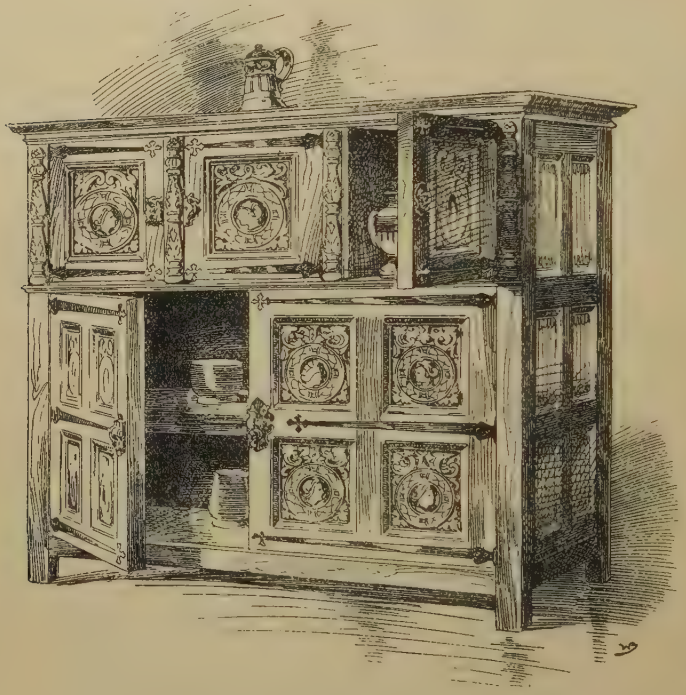
remembered that we have in our midst now designers and craftsmen as gifted in all respects as any the world has ever seen. Given the opportunity, these men are fully capable of designing and executing work which would rival, and probably surpass, the finest productions of any age or country, but—and there *is* that awful "but"—it is the opportunity, and not the genius, which is wanting. The days when artists—I am speaking now of those who devote themselves to the applied arts—enjoyed the generous, indeed lavish, patronage of such men as Lorenzo di Medici, or the recognition and support of the State, as in France during the reign of Louis the Fourteenth, are past and gone—it would almost seem for ever; and both artist and craftsman, as well as art and craftsmanship, suffer as a natural consequence.

It will be well for us, then, always to bear in mind the fact that, with very few and unimportant exceptions, it is only the best and therefore most expensive work of the past which has survived for so long a time; and that such furniture as adorned the homes of the poorer, and a considerable percentage of the middle, classes has gone to the wall long ago.

With regard to the sixteenth and seventeenth century furniture of our own land especially, it must not be forgotten that the history of the times during which it was designed and manufactured literally teems with records of wars and rumours of wars. This makes it perfectly clear to the thoughtful student that the condition of affairs then generally obtaining was not conducive to the cultivation of the arts of peace. Indeed it is astonishing that so much has survived as is now to be found in our national museums and private collections. How far the existence of this state of continual political and social unrest is reflected in the forms and general character of the furniture and woodwork of the period concerned we shall discover later, when we come

to consider individually the pieces illustrated by way of example.

Of furniture proper, that is to say portable articles such as tables and chairs, dating from the reign of Henry the



HENRY-THE-EIGHTH ARMOIRE

(Now in the possession of Mr. J. Seymour Lucas, R.A.)

(*See below for reference*).

Eighth, actual and authentic specimens are all but non-existent; our knowledge, therefore, of the household gods of that time must, for the most part, be acquired from ancient books and prints. But I am fortunate in being able to illustrate one piece, the authenticity of which is not open

to question—a Henry-the-Eighth *armoire*, now in the possession of Mr. J. Seymour Lucas, R.A. This is thoroughly "François-Premier" in character, and it is most probable that the carving was actually designed and executed by French artists and craftsmen, but the construction is undoubtedly English. Mr. Lucas discovered this example in an old farmhouse, where it was used for the storage of cheeses, and fifteen years elapsed before he could induce the owner to part with it. Yet he persisted, and in the end secured the treasure. It is true that, in spite of determined purification and fumigation, the cupboards are still redolent of cheese, but that is a small matter under the circumstances.

It is not, however, my present intention to go back to so early a date. Our study will seriously commence with the style prevailing at the end of the reign of Elizabeth, with the period when what has become known as the "Elizabethan" was at its zenith, and almost on the eve of that transition which finally resulted in the evolution of the "Jacobean."

It is hardly necessary for me to say that the "Elizabethan" in architecture did not actually attain its highest development until about the year 1607, when King James the First was on the throne. It is, therefore, in the stately homes erected or completed at the time when the rule of the Stuarts was commencing that we find the style at its best, and interpreted by men of the calibre of John Thorpe and other eminent contemporary architects. Of these old residences but few remain in their entirety: those which have successfully withstood the ravages of time and escaped the tender mercies of the destroyer are, however, sufficient to enable us to gain a glimpse of the dignity and splendour of the internal architectural woodwork of the houses in which the "Upper Ten" of the days of "Good Queen Bess" were wont to live. On the other hand, examples of genuine Elizabethan movable furniture are extremely rare and difficult to find. Those who possess any

may deem themselves fortunate indeed, and are entitled to crow—to use a colloquialism—over the vast majority of their fellow-collectors.

The growth of the "Jacobean" out of the style which immediately preceded it was very gradual, and commenced with small beginnings; hence, in its earlier forms, it is sometimes not easy to distinguish the offspring from the parent, so closely do they resemble one another. Not a few important characteristics remained for a lengthy period common to both styles, with the inevitable result that, when studying the two, much confusion may arise, and considerable knowledge of minuter details is required to enable us successfully to get over the difficulty. In apportioning the various phases of these styles to their proper periods, we are guided, however, to a certain extent, by the commendable practice of some of the old wood carvers of dating their works. The figures, as we shall see presently in our illustrated examples, frequently are cleverly interwoven with, and so made to constitute a part of, the carved and inlaid enrichment. A similar course, I need hardly say, was followed by the old Moorish decorators, as exemplified in the incomparable Alhambra, and elsewhere in Spain and Morocco. Genuine examples of English sixteenth and seventeenth century furniture in which this occurs, it is true, are not very numerous, but a few are extant, and they aid us considerably in arriving at a decision as to the approximate dates of other pieces similar in character but not so distinguished.

Speaking generally, most of the seventeenth-century British furniture which now remains to guide us in our studies is of oak; but it by no means follows that oak was the only wood used by the cabinet and chair makers of those days in the pursuance of their crafts; walnut, ash, elm, beech, chestnut, and other woods were also extensively employed. It was the oak, however, which proved to be

most fitted to "brave the battle and the breeze," and defy the ravages of centuries, in the home as on the "rolling wave"; while the less enduring productions of the forest and woodland have long since given way before the strain imposed upon them. Chairs, and not so frequently, tables, are occasionally to be met with in the less durable woods, but these are almost invariably either in a state of extreme dilapidation, or else have been "restored" out of all recognition of their former selves, leaving but little of the original structures to tell the tale.

Of the series of styles with which I shall endeavour to deal in these pages, those which had rise during the century now under consideration present, on the whole, perhaps, the least difficulty as regards general classification; but to give to each its proper place is not nearly so simple. Still, I think, and hope, that a careful study of the accompanying types, and of the special peculiarities and characteristics of each, will enable the reader to obtain such a knowledge of the subject as will materially assist in the removal of many obstacles which might otherwise lie in his path.

We might reasonably imagine that the *whole* of the woodwork—furniture, wall-panelling, etc.—of the "Elizabethan," as of other periods, would partake, to a very large extent if not wholly, of one and the same character, constituting one more or less harmonious whole. That, curious as it may appear, was not by any means the case. A certain degree of relationship is apparent, of course, between the various examples; but, notwithstanding that, a very considerable difference is to be recorded. Broadly speaking, the architectural woodwork of the "Elizabethan" is marked by a far greater refinement and more perfect execution than is the furniture of the same period, which partakes of a more rugged character; though there are occasional exceptions to this rule. Those exceptions, however, were only to be found among the household gods designed and made for the

wealthier patrons, and cannot in any sense be accepted as representative of the art or craft of the age.

In studying the furnishing of the homes of this period, we must be careful, at the outset, not to forget the fact that, during the early part of the seventeenth century, the great majority of the people, the "masses" as they are glibly termed nowadays, subsisted and worked under conditions vastly different from those which prevail in the present day. We must remember that even the average modern "desirable villa residence," imperfect as it may be in our estimation, would have been regarded by the *bourgeois* of the time of James the First, and of his immediate successors, with feelings not far removed from awe, and the admiration excited by what to them must have seemed models of comfort and convenience would have been unbounded. In those days the family of small means did not rejoice in the possession of separate and distinct dining and drawing rooms; and such a thing as a "spare bedroom," that joy of the newly-wedded wife, was a sign of opulence indeed. Then, the single apartment, which, be it noted, was not by any means too commodious, was requisitioned to serve many purposes, except, of course, in the homes of the well-to-do; even with the majority of the upper middle classes accommodation was none too generous. Thus it came about, in the natural order of events, that little attention was lavished upon any apartment other than those devoted to sleeping, to the entertainment of guests, and the enjoyment of the "kindly fruits of the earth"; it is, therefore, to the old bedrooms and living-rooms that we must look first for the most typical examples of the furniture in common use during the period in question.

It will be apparent then, I think, that it is quite impossible to classify most of the pieces of furniture of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as having been designed and manufactured for exclusive service in any one particular room, such as the drawing-room, dining-room, bedroom, hall, library,

or study, as can be done with the majority of the productions of a later date. They had practically no definite abiding place, but were shifted from one part of the house to another, as occasion demanded, and even from one residence to another when protracted visits were being paid. Of this aspect of the subject I shall have more to say in due course.

Recognising also the fact that much of the furniture now in everyday use is quite modern in origin, so far as form and general appointments are concerned, and having discovered that many articles which are now regarded as necessities were quite unknown to our forefathers of two centuries ago, it is more than a little interesting to endeavour to discover what occupied their places in the early days, and to see how far the requirements of the household were fulfilled by the comparatively few predecessors of the thousand-and-one objects which are now to be found in almost every furnishing showroom throughout the country.

Before, then, entering upon a detailed examination of the individual examples which I have selected for illustration on the plates which are to follow, I will enumerate the chief pieces with which the collector is likely to meet nowadays, dating from the "Elizabethan" period.

First and foremost come chests or coffers of many sizes, shapes, and descriptions; and the extensive variety to be met with even to-day in all parts of the kingdom, of unquestionable authenticity, is proof conclusive that they undoubtedly ranked among the most important and indispensable accessories of the English home from the very first institution of the art and craft of the cabinet maker. They ranked next in importance, that is to say, to the beds, tables, and seats of one kind or another, which supplied the requirements of bodily repose and the appetite.

It is not by any means an uncommon thing for writers to assert that the old English chest was the direct descendant of, and inspired by, the gorgeous Italian marriage coffers, or

*cassoni*, of the Renaissance. Such a statement is certainly not altogether correct, for we must go much farther back to discover their origin. The *cassoni*, indeed, were themselves nothing more nor less than glorifications, for special occasions, of a piece of furniture known and used, ages before the Renaissance was dreamed of, by all classes who possessed any furniture at all; and if we want to trace them really to their source we must search the records of those days when solid trunks of trees were "scooped out," more or less clumsily, in order that they might be utilised for the required purposes. One such is standing within a few feet of me as I write these lines.

The chest, like the chair, table, and bed, was, in the first place, the outcome of an absolute necessity. Provided that it satisfied the requirements which called for its construction, little or no thought was originally devoted to making it graceful or in any way decorative. Convenience, strength, and security were the first considerations to be borne in mind. It was obvious that clothes, when they came into general use, had to be stored somewhere, and when once the ball was set rolling, the steady development of fashion in wearing-apparel called for ever-increasing accommodation. With the growth of civilisation the smaller appointments of the household also increased and multiplied; and, little by little, things which were once regarded as luxuries, unattainable by most people, found their way into nearly every home, and finally came into vogue as articles of constant and everyday use, whose services could not be dispensed with by anyone. Apart quite from the adornment of the body—by no means an inconsiderable matter as time went on—the loom was set to work to enhance the comfort of the bed chamber and beautify the table; and the increase of household linen of every kind and description provided another reason for the devising of convenient and safe receptacles for such domestic treasures. Further, the taking of meals came to be re-

garded as something more than the mere unavoidable consumption of food for the sustentation of the body. Dinner, particularly, developed into an important function, at which friends might be fittingly feasted upon the "fat of the land," where good-fellowship could reign supreme, and at which brilliant intellects, pitted one against another, might furnish that "feast of reason and flow of soul"—too often, it has been said, a "flow of bowl"—which elevated the mere meal into a feast in every sense of the word. This, of course, rendered it essential, or at least desirable, that the appointments of the table should not only answer the demands of strict utilitarianism, but at the same time should be of such a character as to give pleasure to the eye. Knives, forks, spoons, dishes, plates, and glass commenced to receive the attention of artists and craftsmen of the highest renown. The simplest implements and utensils, which formerly could lay claim to the possession of but small decorative value, or indeed of any value apart from their utility, for they were originally fashioned from the commonest and least expensive materials, were produced in rare and costly metals, wrought and enriched with the greatest taste and skill that influence and money could command. The family plate was raised to a position of rare honour and importance, and was proudly regarded as one of the most cherished possessions of the old English home. Most of this, also, had to be kept in safety somewhere, and here, once more, the chest was welcomed as a satisfactory solution of the problem. In view of all these many and varied demands, it is not surprising that the design and manufacture of that piece of furniture occupied no small part of the time and attention of the old woodworker.

It is certainly not easy for the twentieth-century housewife, who has at her command fire and burglar proof safes, steel and iron jewel caskets, wardrobes, linen presses, chests of drawers, roomy cupboards, box rooms, closets, cabinets, sideboards, and other similar receptacles, devised by modern

ingenuity, to appreciate all the difficulties with which the lady of the seventeenth-century house had to contend, or to understand by what means she could possibly overcome them.

The question "where to put things" has ever constituted a problem most difficult to solve for those of our women folk who are endowed with a love of tidiness, and who would be so bold as to assert that there exists any woman who is not so endowed? So generally is this recognised, that, as time goes on, architects strive more and more earnestly to provide in their houses the greatest possible number of cupboards in the smallest possible space, while the designer of cabinet work racks his brains to satisfy his prospective lady clients in the provision of shelves, brackets, drawers, pigeon-holes, and every other description of hole, corner, and recess which it is possible to imagine and devise. Yet, with all the ingenuity that they can bring to bear upon the matter, the task of giving perfect satisfaction seems to be as far from actual accomplishment as ever.

To return to the "Good old Days." The necessity for conveniences and accommodation of the class I have indicated was by no means so great as it is now. Tastes were more simple and less exacting; it was far more easy, therefore, to satisfy them. The same difficulty, nevertheless, certainly did exist then, though in a lesser degree, and the manner in which it was overcome brings us back to the chest or coffer pure and simple. We shall presently mark the most characteristic forms which it took in its earlier stages, as well as make a point of noticing the manner in which it blossomed forth into something far more imposing than the unpretentious rectangular box which was the earliest ancestor of the whole tribe. For the moment we have come to the conclusion that this piece of furniture, in its various forms, was in great demand, and was, in consequence, extensively manufactured; it is not, therefore, surprising to find that examples

of it rank among the most numerous of the relics now existing of the days to which they belonged.

Next in number and importance come seats and chairs, articles of a type more indispensable, of course, than the chests themselves, as it is obvious that we *must* sit or lie somewhere, whatever may become of our various and sundry impedimenta.

Continuing the list we have sturdy side-tables, developing later into "court" and "bread-and-cheese" cupboards, "bahuts," and "armoires"—ancestors to the sideboard of to-day, though so vastly different in form and character; smaller tables—rectangular, circular, hexagonal, and octagonal, and in some cases so contrived as to fold up; and last, but by no means least as far as general proportions are concerned, four-post bedsteads.

Other pieces not included in the foregoing list may be discovered occasionally here and there, but they are exceptions, and, as such, will not enter very largely into our calculations.

I have contended that the earnest and well-informed student of the furniture of days gone by cannot fail, if he pursue his studies in the proper vein, to find clearly expressed in the examples with which he has to deal more than a slight indication of the different spirits pervading the ages in which they were produced; and, indeed, it is difficult to see how it could be otherwise. This contention is, I am well aware, far from being a novel one, but the fact is not as generally appreciated as it should be, and I am perfectly confident that, were it more fully realised and strenuously insisted upon, many more people would be inclined to pay greater attention to a study the pursuit of which positively teems with interest and delight.

Owing to ignorance—not necessarily intentional ignorance—the subject is regarded at present by some as an unpleasant and incomprehensible "craze" for raking over and "rum-

maging", among objectionable, dusty, and worm-eaten stuff, which in their estimation should long ago have been relegated to the dustbin, or have been chopped up for firewood.

We are told that there are sermons in stones. If that be so, and unquestionably, if accepted in its proper sense, the statement cannot be refuted, surely there is many a story "writ large" in the household gods of our forefathers. Nay, their actual tastes and habits may be judged to a far greater extent from their furniture; for their places of abode—the eloquent stones of architecture—were, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, planned and built quite independently of any consideration of the individual preferences or requirements of their possible occupants. On the other hand, their internal environment, the furniture and woodwork with which they were to be surrounded, was of their own seeking and selection, and it is to be presumed that they made a point of acquiring that which appealed most strongly to their ideas regarding what should be, so far at least as the means at their command would permit. If this view of the matter be accepted as correct, it is not too much to claim that a people, or an age, may, to a very considerable degree, be judged by the furniture and woodwork appertaining to them.

Regarded in this light, the study of these old chests and tables, beds and chairs, is veritably fraught with romance. They become animated, and talk with us of times, manners, and customs long since gone by, and almost forgotten; and we see grouped around them the giant shadows of men and women who have made history, as well as those of the quiet family circle, drawn cosily round the homely ingle, whose deeds, it is true, have never been handed down to posterity, but who, nevertheless, played their part in the great game of life.

The inclination to enlarge upon the romantic side of old furniture collecting is great and hardly to be resisted, but I must not give way to temptation here. I must content myself

with simply indicating that the romantic side really does exist, and with assuring the student that it will reveal itself more and more fully the greater and more devoted the attention he accords to the subject. Regarding in this light the work of the period with which we are now dealing, we naturally endeavour to discover what kind of story it has to tell us, apart from the mere interest derived from the artistic and technical view of its design and construction; and we attempt to trace, in its lines and enrichment, something of the history and conditions of the people who made it, and for whom it was made. What is its general character, and what can we read in it? Sturdy, often-times to the point of clumsiness; obviously constructed to withstand the hardest of usage, and defy Time the Destroyer; made in one of the hardest woods obtainable; it is enriched, it is true, with carving and inlay, but in a manner which is comparatively primitive, and there is every indication in these late "Elizabethan" and "Jacobean" chairs and tables that the age in which they were made was not in any way notable for the cultivation, encouragement, and consequent development of the arts of peace. I need hardly say that the impression which they convey in that respect is in no way misleading. Time and again the country was embroiled in strife for the support or overthrow of one cause or another. The kingdom was split into factions, blown hither and thither, as one or the other party gained the upper hand; men, and indeed members of the same families, erstwhile the closest of friends, became the bitterest of enemies in consequence of the views which they severally entertained respecting the question of home government.

The old saying, "An Englishman's home is his castle," was something more than a mere figure of speech in those days, suggesting possible invasion and defence of its rights and privileges. No man then knew when he might be called upon to protect himself, his family, and his goods from the raids constantly being planned and carried out by political

opponents, and which resulted by no means infrequently in bloodshed, and almost invariably in the destruction or loss of property.

Living under such conditions as these, and finding it absolutely necessary to be prepared for the worst, knowing not what any moment might bring forth, it is hardly to be wondered at that our forefathers regarded existence as a stern reality, and had but little time, whatever inclination they may have possessed, for the acquisition of those graces and refinements which go to make life beautiful. They were to follow in after years.

Everything with them was uncertain, from personal safety to the security of every penny they possessed ; and they were compelled to adjust themselves to their political and social environment, and deport themselves accordingly. It is not necessary for me to dip further into a period of English history the records of which will be fresh in the memory of all who peruse these pages, except to point out, here and there, how certain changes in the government and condition of the people influenced, and are consequently to be traced in, their home surroundings.

One of the first points to be noted in connection with early Jacobean furniture is that plain, straightforward, and simple construction is its principal characteristic, and that under no circumstances is undue elaboration of general form to be expected. If found, it must be classed under an altogether different heading, as hailing from some other country, or dating from an entirely different period of time.

I insist upon this, as I am writing, for the moment, of form alone, as entirely distinct from enrichment of any class or description—a phase of our subject that will be dealt with at length in its proper place.

Regarded, then, simply as examples of construction, the cabinet work, almost without exception, is such as might have, and probably very often did, come from the bench of

the skilful and conscientious carpenter, so primitive is it and entirely free from those constructional problems the solution of which was imposed upon the cabinet maker by designers of succeeding centuries. By way of illustrating this statement, let us take the chests, to which reference has already been made. Many, indeed the majority, of them are but little more than simple rectangular boxes, strongly put together, varying only so far as size and relative proportions are concerned. Some are raised slightly from the floor, say from three to nine inches, and supported by a roughly turned sphere of wood, a square leg, or a continuation of the end framework; and some rest flat upon the floor itself. Whatever claim these might make to the possession of decorative value—and many of them, as we shall presently see, certainly did possess that quality—must be credited not to the skill of the craftsman responsible for the "carcase," as the main body of any piece of cabinet work is technically termed in the trade, but to that of the carvers and inlayers who, when the "carcase" was completed, and ready to be put together, were called in to enrich it to the best of their ability and so far as considerations of cost allowed. So much for the moment for a brief summing-up of the leading characteristics of the *forms* of Jacobean cabinet work.

Now a word or two, by way of introduction, respecting the enrichment. This, I need hardly say, was, at the inception of the style, more than a little hybrid in character, partaking to a certain extent of the late "Elizabethan," and even, not infrequently, awakening memories of the Gothic, which "died hard." Notwithstanding the energy displayed by the pioneers of the English Renaissance to kill, or, at all events, supersede the traditions of the Middle Ages by the introduction into the furnishing of the home of what was in those days a "New Art," the Gothic was not to be despatched at a blow. After the lapse of many a year, the old "linen" and "parchment" panels, originated by,

and beloved of, the ecclesiastical carvers of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, still put in an appearance, though amidst strange surroundings; and we do not seem to tire of them. They are often accompanied by other decorative detail, the origin of which dates from the days when the carver more often than not found his training in, or under the shadow of, the monastery. This is so all through the "Elizabethan," and far into the "Jacobean" era.

Yet "Jacobean" detail in its purest phases was neither entirely new nor in any way revolutionary; it must rather be regarded in the light of a crude attempt on the part of the British carver to follow in the footsteps of the foreign craftsmen brought over to this country during previous reigns by the command, and under the patronage, of royalty. This is a point that must not be overlooked. Proud as we may be of the position we have won among the nations of the world in relation to the cultivation and development of the arts and crafts, we must by no means ignore the fact that, in these early days, not to speak of more recent times which will call for our consideration later, we depended very largely, not only upon foreign inspiration, but upon the actual presence in our midst of foreign artists and craftsmen themselves. If we look for a moment at the inlay, carving, and decorative painting produced in this country during the reigns of Henry the Eighth and Elizabeth, we shall see that nearly all the finest was from the hands of skilled artists, neither born nor trained upon British soil, but induced to work here for a time at rates of remuneration almost princely in their generosity. It sometimes happened, as a matter of fact, that more than one royal patron of the arts was endeavouring to secure the services of the same man at one and the same time, and it was only natural that the highest bidder should gain the day. At all events, they had to be induced to come somehow, and at almost any price.

These men were born and bred in countries where art seems to have been in the very air, and where, too, the most generous, nay, more than generous financial encouragement of art in all its phases was not lacking. Small wonder that men saturated, so to speak, by the very atmosphere of the Italian and French Renaissance; men who had played leading parts in making those styles what they were; absolute masters of design and craftsmanship, and artists by birth, to their very finger tips, should be in demand; and we may feel thankful that we are so fortunate as to enjoy some, at least, of the fruits of their genius. They came over to show what *they* could do, and set an example for us to follow, if we could. But to admire was one thing; to follow quite another. The rare and perfect mastery which they possessed, and which, in a great degree, was a national as well as a hereditary gift with them, was not to be acquired by the conservative Briton in a day—far from it! He did his best, doubtless, so far as his temperament and the conditions under which he lived and worked would permit; but it was an insignificant best at the most. Sympathetic and lenient as we may be, and naturally are, through national pride, we cannot fail to recognise the many shortcomings in these early attempts to copy a style, or rather styles, which were altogether foreign to our nature. We might almost say of the British carver of that period that, for no inconsiderable time, he was floundering about in strange waters which were altogether too deep for him, and in which it was as much as he could do to keep afloat at all. The result was that he produced a sort of debased "Renaissance" which, though effective in its way, we cannot but admit was vastly different from, or, as some say, nothing better than a weak caricature of, the originals which had come to life under the sunny skies and amid the rarely beautiful natural surroundings of Italy and France.

The "Elizabethan" and "Jacobean" were almost entirely devoid of all the romance, fantastic spirit, and extraordinary brilliance associated with the parent styles—the outcome of the temperaments of those responsible for their origination. They were, on the other hand, stamped with the mark of a rugged honesty of purpose created by, and characteristic of, the stern needs of our forefathers of the days of the Armada, of "Marston Moor," and a hundred other memorable conflicts; men made in a different mould from that of their masters in art and craft, and but little disposed to change their nature. They were, of course, quite prepared to buy furniture, as it was an absolute necessity; and were not averse to the expenditure of some time, labour, and expense upon its embellishment, provided that the cost were not too great. But what they *did* have must needs be of a sensible and enduring description, such as would fully please their tastes and satisfy all their requirements; furniture not made for show alone, but designed and constructed to bear the brunt of stern times, when practical utility and lasting qualities were held in the highest esteem, and graces, whether of manner or adornment, played a secondary part.

I have had the temerity to assert that Jacobean decoration, particularly carved and inlaid decoration, was practically a debased version of the Italian "Renaissance" and "Elizabethan," and a brief comparison of the ornamental detail of the three styles will furnish ample proof that this assertion, bold and sweeping as it may appear to be, has foundation in fact. Let us consider first, for example, the crude, ill-drawn, and roughly-carved, though effective, foliations so commonly employed in the first-named, and we shall discover at once that they are in reality neither more nor less than a sort of school-boy attempt to copy the sparkling and piquant leafage, with its graceful sweeps, scrolls, and delicate veining, of the "Cinque-Cento." They bear a closer resemblance to our common cabbage than to the sprightly

acanthus and similar natural forms whence the Italians drew their inspiration. The successions of circles also, sometimes separate and distinct one from another, sometimes interlaced so as to form a connected and continuous repeating pattern, with and without rosettes or other decorative filling in their centres, such as we constantly meet with in the carving of this period, are, beyond any possible manner of doubt, descended from the old Roman *guilloche*. They were most probably introduced so frequently owing to the fact that they were easy and cost but little to execute, and required nothing more than a slight knowledge of the use of the compasses in the "setting-out." Yet, at one and the same time, they furnished an expeditious method of filling awkward spaces most effectively.

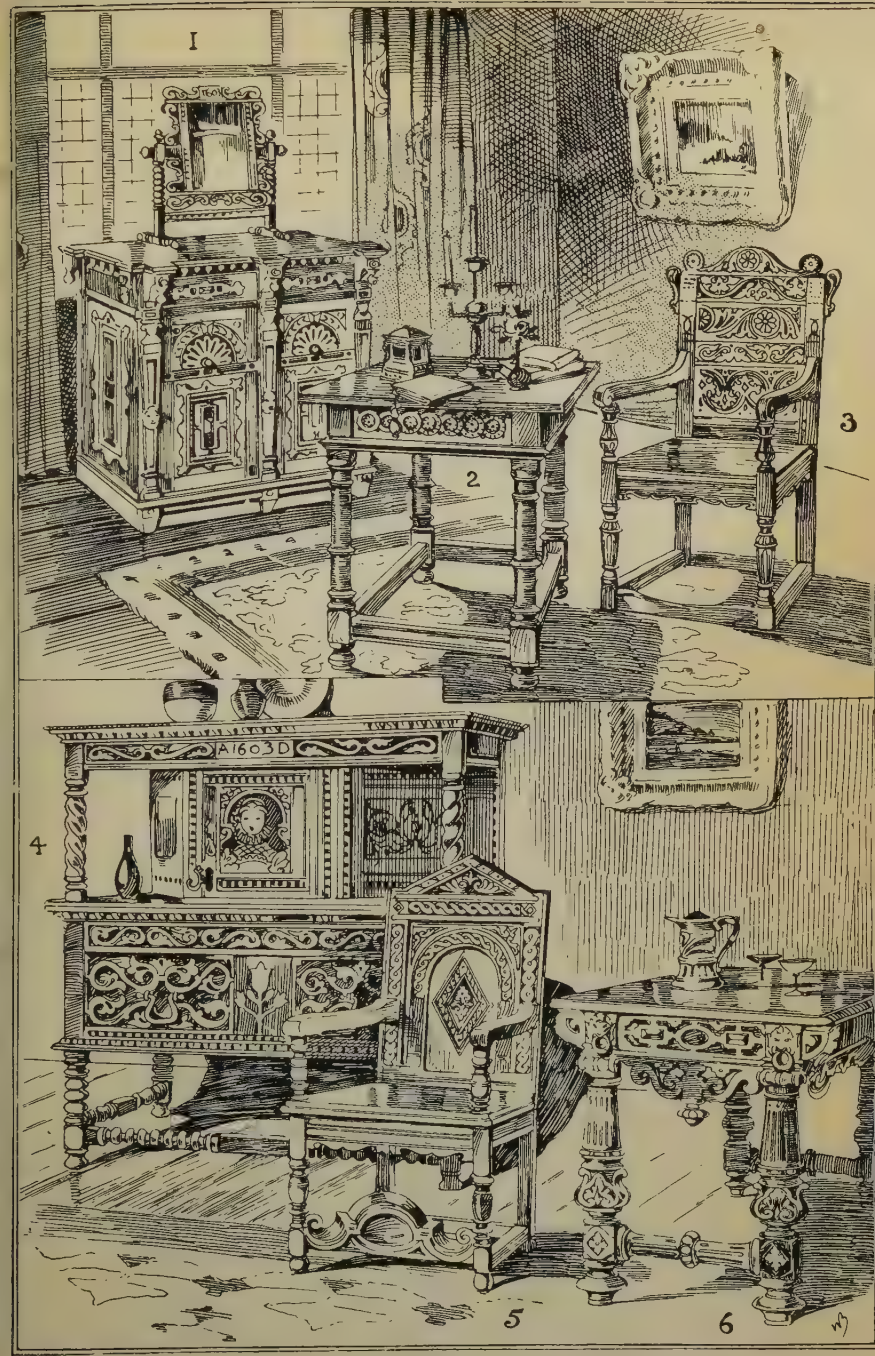
Next we find the familiar "nulling," freely used in cabinet work of the more costly and elaborate class—a feature which hails direct from the Italian—and many other details from the "Cinque-Cento," "François-Premier," "Henri-Deux," and "Flemish," undergoing a strange metamorphosis when transported from all the associations of the vineyards and sunshine of their native lands to be interpreted by devotees of the strong beer and roast beef of Old England. But, having taken a general review of the period with which we have to deal just now, it will, doubtless, prove to be far more satisfactory if we discuss all these points in connection with illustrated examples of the various phases and details referred to, and this we will at once proceed to do.

# "ELIZABETHAN"

Now that we have completed our general survey of the influences at work to render the English furnishings of the greater part of the seventeenth century what they ultimately became, it is time that we should analytically examine representations of typical examples, which will enable the reader to acquire sufficient knowledge of the form and detail portrayed to decide, without any great degree of hesitation or difficulty, as to the approximate date of any old piece belonging to this period. To the "Elizabethan" we shall look first, making that the starting-point for our studies.

Those who still retain sufficient recollection of their schooling to recall the fact that their cordially detested "dates" included the item, "Queen Elizabeth, 1558–1603," will, if they have followed the preceding pages carefully, deem it somewhat strange that I have classified this style with those of the seventeenth century. I will, therefore, recall the fact that the "Elizabethan" did not attain its full development until after James the First had ascended the throne. It is, of course, true that the style was originated during the earlier reign, and, indeed, was assiduously cultivated in the days of the "Virgin Queen," but it was then young, and had not had time to arrive at full maturity.

I have explained that of furniture actually designed and made prior to the commencement of the seventeenth century, comparatively little remains, and what has been handed down to us in any state of preservation is most jealously guarded in a few private collections, and in national museums. Any aspiring collector, therefore, who entertains the hope of encountering specimens in out-of-the-way dealers' shops or

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| Fig. 1. | See 34 |
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auction salerooms may regard himself as almost inevitably doomed to disappointment. Even to the vast majority of students they are equally unavailable. As a natural consequence, most of us must rest content to note the lines of this furniture from such pictorial illustrations as we may be able to obtain, and even they are few.

Passing on to our examples, and leaving out of our calculations interior architectural woodwork—joinery, wall-panelling, and the like—we shall see that the most complete object-lessons perhaps in "Elizabethan" carving and ornamental detail generally to be found are the stately and elaborate "four-post" bedsteads—"tester" beds—which have withstood the wear-and-tear of centuries, and bear testimony to the grandeur of the stately homes of England of the days when Drake was scouring the seas in pursuit of glory or booty; when Raleigh was revealing to his friends the mysteries of the pipe and the potato; when Essex was composing his sonnets to his royal mistress; and the "Immortal Bard" was moving the people to laughter or to tears by the magic of his wondrous pen. With the bedstead, therefore, we will seriously commence our analytical and comparative study of this period.

Speaking of old furniture whose interest is supposed to be enhanced by some particular association, it is said that Charles Dickens, in a letter to a friend who was an ardent collector, stated, with mischievous glee, that he had discovered a veritable "find," in fact no less a treasure than a chair which "the Duke of Wellington had positively refused to sit in!" But, if we are to place credence in the histories that have accumulated round the sixteenth, and more particularly seventeenth-century bedsteads treasured in country houses throughout the kingdom, it would be difficult, if not almost impossible, to meet with a single one which Good Queen Bess had refused to sleep in! One and all appear to be honoured on account of the cherished and cumulative tradition

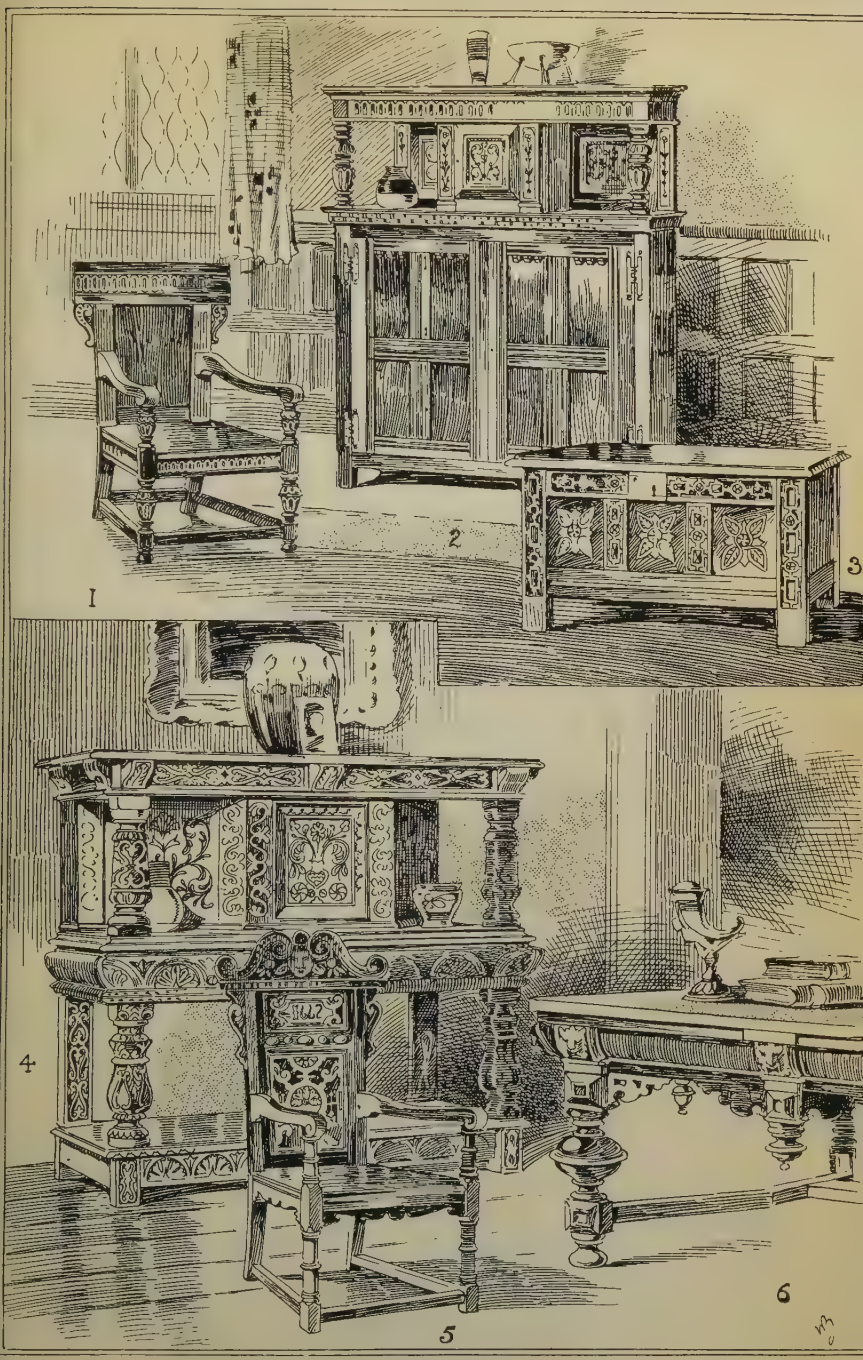
that they constituted, at one time or another, the resting-place of that sovereign's precious and august form.

If all these traditions be accepted as true, we must come to the conclusion that this monarch cannot possibly have enjoyed many waking hours over and above those occupied by her travels from one mansion to another. Be that as it may—and the question of the authenticity of such stories does not concern us much—the genuineness of the date and design of the bedsteads is beyond dispute. It will be sufficient for our purpose if we study them carefully as types of style, and leave the verification of the traditions associated with them to others who may be more immediately interested in that question.

In our study and analysis of the ornamental detail of the "Elizabethan," we shall find, as a general rule, that the earlier the date of the piece we have to examine the more refined it will be in every particular. It will bear a closer relationship to the models set up by the Italian and French artists and craftsmen who were brought to this country by the liberality of Henry the Eighth, and by his ministers and court, who desired to enhance the material splendour of his regal surroundings—and of their own at the same time.

It will be remembered that I have pointed out how it was not at all uncommon for French and Italian painters, carvers, and other craftsmen of the highest renown, during the sixteenth century to be paid large sums in order to take up their abode in this country for a space, and work in the cathedrals, palaces, castles, and mansions of royalty and the nobility. Hence arose the English Renaissance, or "Elizabethan," as it is more generally styled; and thus four distinct and most powerful influences were brought to bear in our midst.

First and foremost was that of the pure and unadulterated Italian Renaissance; then that of its French and equally beautiful offspring, the "François-Premier," with which came the "Henri-Deux"; and finally the Renaissance of the

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| Fig. 1. | See 33, 54 | Fig. 4. | See 30, 32, 46 |
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Netherlands, which played no inconsiderable part in supplying inspiration to the style whose name heads this chapter. That this inspiration was readily and freely drawn from all four sources by the English designer of those times, as well as of succeeding centuries, is amply demonstrated by the work of the period. We sometimes find, indeed, a curious, though by no means unpleasing, combination of the four styles in a single piece of furniture; in fact, this may be noticed to some extent in the bedstead which appears in Fig. 6, Plate I., in this chapter. Let us consider this carefully and in detail.

The manner of building-up the two pillars at the foot end is, of course, Italian in origin, but it is the Italian idea filtered, so to speak, through the "François-Premier" mind; while the "strap-work" enrichment of the upper part of the shaft partakes of both the "Henri-Deux" and Flemish spirits. The generous proportions of the two rotund, bulbous members of the turning clearly bespeak the English taste of that day. It will be seen, then, that the complete scheme is a real *mélange* of different styles; but it must be observed, at the same time, that all these styles, which spring from the same source, are in perfect accord, notwithstanding the many variations of detail to be noted.

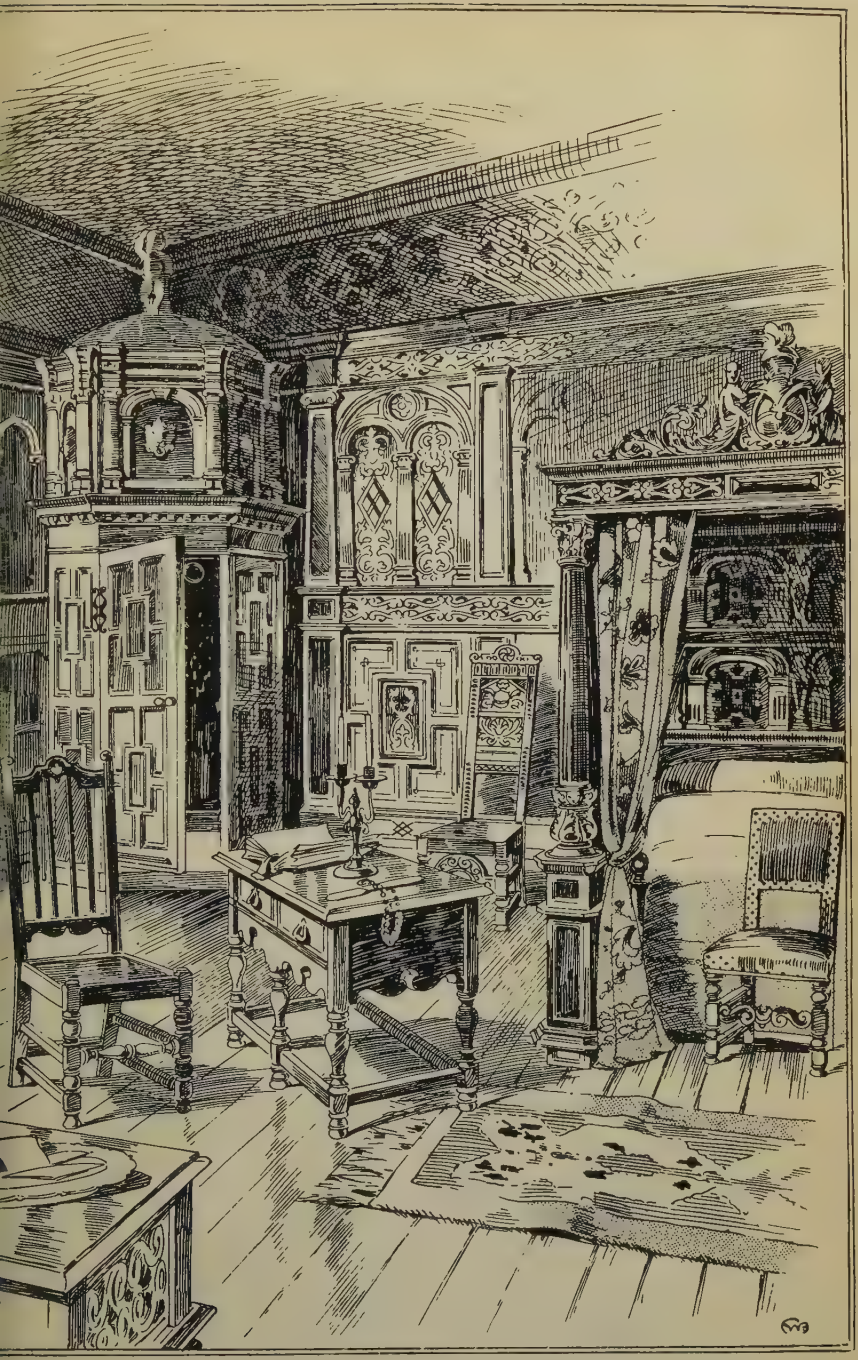
What the quaint semblances of animals, glowering from the four corners of the canopy, or "tester," are intended to represent, I would not venture to suggest: they can hardly have symbolised the "four angels," whose safe guardianship has assured slumber to many generations for centuries past. All the rest of the carving of that section of the structure is, in conception and spirit, thoroughly Italian—the true Italian of the "Cinque-Cento." In the four smaller carved panels in the upper part of the foot we have again "scraps" of "Henri-Deux," which might have come straight from the wall-panelling of the beautiful ball-room in the Château at Fontainebleau; but, in the carving beneath, the mark of the sixteenth-century

English carver appears most unmistakably. He had not yet been able to acquire the *spirit* of the styles which were even then comparatively new to France and Italy, the lands of their origin.

In this last carving we have the early beginnings of that type of panel in which more or less crude leafage of a nondescript character, outlined by an interlacing "strap," or plain "fillet" or edging of wood, is arranged geometrically—generally as a quatrefoil. In the course of our study we shall meet with this frequently. Finally, as regards this bedstead, the panelling at the head, in the semi-circular arches, is another medley of Italian and less pure "Elizabethan."

I have fixed upon this truly magnificent old example for consideration at the outset on account of the fact that it would be difficult to find another piece so exhaustively representative of every one of the essential factors of the style with which we are now dealing; it conveys, moreover, a remarkably adequate impression of the richness of the domestic belongings indulged in by the wealthier classes of this particular era.

So much space has been devoted to the discussion of this one piece, and to the endeavour to trace each individual item of detail to its proper source, that my remarks on other examples, dating from about the same period, and partaking in a greater or less degree of the same character, may be very materially curtailed. If the bedstead illustrated in Fig. 1, Plate I., be studied in conjunction with that which we have been analysing, and a careful comparison be made of the various parts, detailed comment upon it may be dispensed with. Before passing, however, to articles of furniture in this style, but of another type, yet one more bedstead calls for notice, and that is the one portrayed in the interior represented on Plate IV. This is a study in sixteenth-century designing which many would describe as "Early Eliza-



PANELLED ROOM, FORMERLY IN SIZERGH CASTLE, WESTMORELAND. NOW IN THE VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM, SOUTH KENSINGTON

REFERENCE IN TEXT. See pages 26, 33, 34, 54, 77

bethan"—which, as regards date, it really is; but, so far as style is concerned, it would be far more correctly classified under the heading "Italian," pure and simple. The detail in every part is just such as we find in the fifteenth and sixteenth century Italian work, unaffected by the foreign influences which came into play at a later period.

Of the date of the chest of drawers illustrated by Fig. 3, Plate I., I cannot speak with any degree of certainty, as I have not had the piece itself before me; neither can I vouch for the authenticity of the tables Fig. 6, Plate II., and Fig. 6, Plate III.; but in style they are as typical "Elizabethan" in every respect as we could possibly wish to find. In all three the "strap-work" element is pronounced, and this should be noted particularly, for it is a distinguishing feature, and one most particularly favoured by the English designers and craftsmen of this period. It is, indeed, rarely absent altogether from true "Elizabethan" creations.

I have suggested that this "strap-work," as found in the style under consideration, was largely inspired by the "Henri-Deux," but must again refer to the fact that the predominance of that class of enrichment in both the architecture and the woodwork of the Flemish and Dutch Renaissance must also be accounted responsible in a very large measure for its extensive employment in this country. There were other details as well introduced from the Netherlands which must be borne in mind; but fuller reference to them will be made presently.

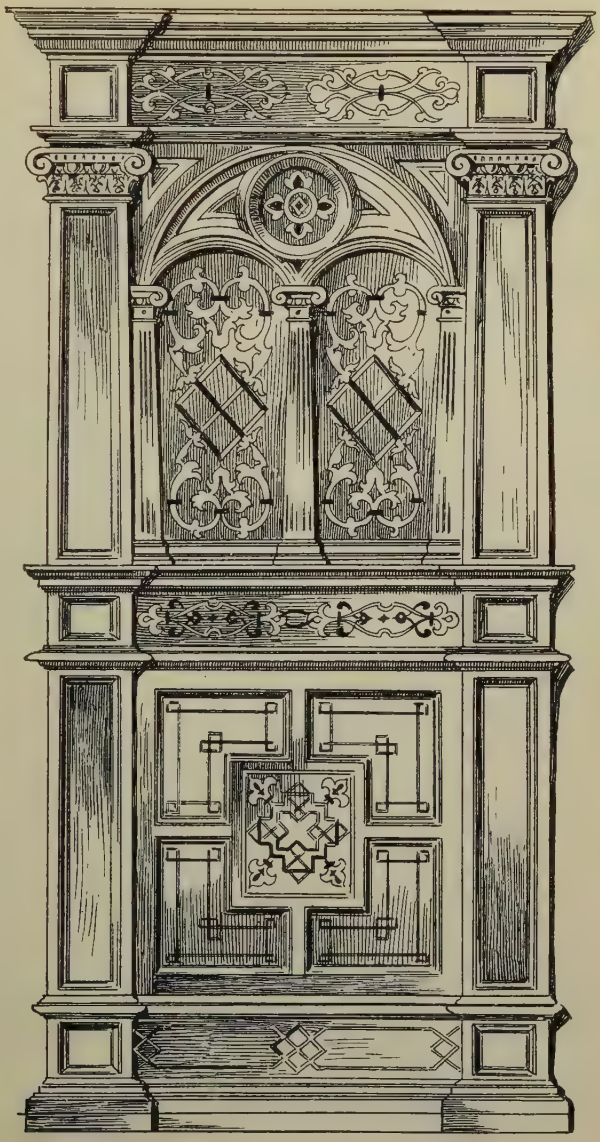
The old cabinet makers of the Elizabethan era did not devote any very great amount of attention to the design or manufacture of articles of furniture specially intended for the comfort of the literarily inclined, but the primitive desk form—the simple box with a sloping lid—was well known to, and produced by, them, though examples are extremely rare. Sometimes it was elevated to a convenient height for writing purposes by being placed upon a table-like base or support,

such as we find in Fig. 4, Plate I., and was thus raised, in more ways than one, to a position of some importance in the furnishing of the home. I may here remind the reader that it was no uncommon thing during the sixteenth century, and even earlier, for other cabinet work of the smaller kind—boxes, chests, and the like—to be provided with independent supports from which the box or chest could be removed expeditiously and at will; and the intention of that arrangement is clear. When so supported, they constituted apparently stable, and not unimportant, additions to the furnishing of any room. But, in the days when such impedimenta as "Gladstone" bags and leather travelling trunks were unknown, these articles often accompanied their possessors from place to place; it was therefore essential that they should be more or less portable: hence the adoption of this form of construction. The upper part could be easily carried about—in earlier examples holes were bored through the sides or ends for ropes or cords to pass through—and the stand was left at home for the reception of its burden on its safe return.

Figure 4 is of this type, and is interesting if only on that account; but it is interesting also in that it really marks the first stage in the development of the simple desk from its original form into that eminently sensible and useful piece of furniture the bureau, which came into such general use at the end of the seventeenth century. In the earliest stages, the lid was hinged at the upper edge, as in the ordinary desk; but it was not long before some inventive genius struck upon the idea of shifting the hinge to the lower edge, so that the inner side of the lid might be used as a writing surface, as in the bureaux of to-day.

The consideration of the supports of this old desk reminds me that a few words on the subject of turning must be said here.

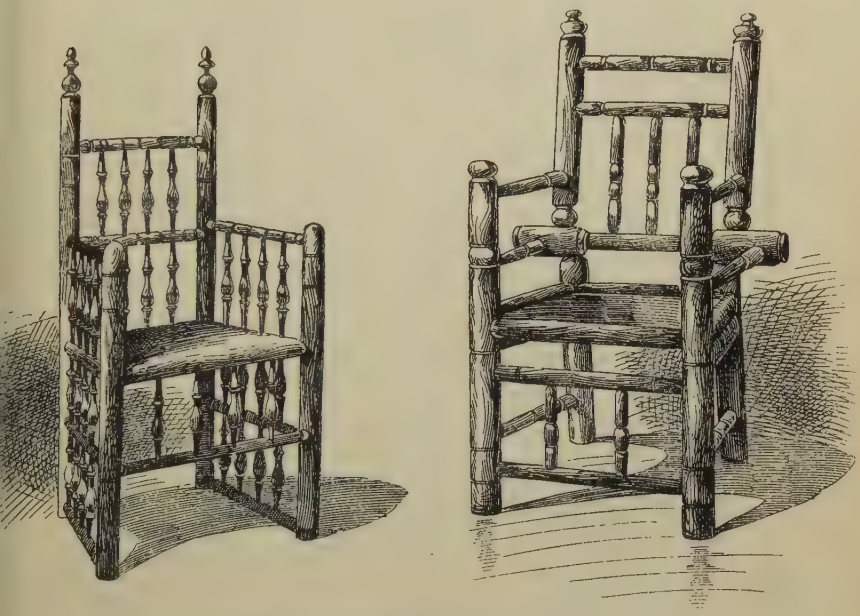
The lathe, it may be noted, was used very extensively in the production of much, if not of most, of the English six-



INLAID PANELLING FROM SIZERGH CASTLE, DRAWN TO LARGER SCALE

REFERENCE IN TEXT. See page 35, and Plate 4

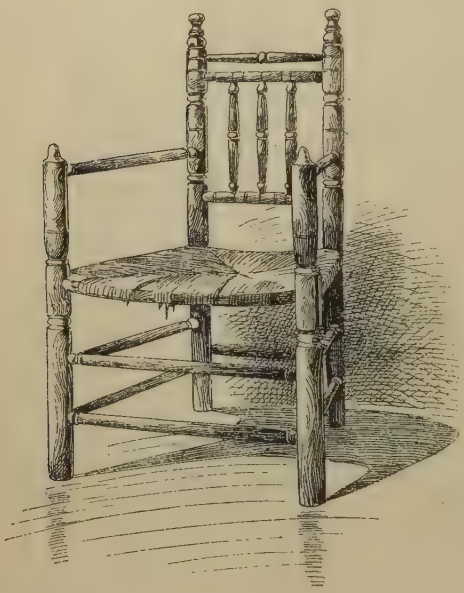
teenth-century furniture of the less expensive class. Take, for example, the three chairs that figure on this and the following page. The turning, however, was of a very simple, even primitive, character, revealing the presence of little or no fertility of ideas on the part of the designers and craftsmen who availed



SIXTEENTH-CENTURY ENGLISH CHAIRS
(Composed principally of turned work)
(*See above for reference*)

themselves so generously of its aid. Instead of a pleasing variety of different "members," such as is to be found in the turning of the best periods, delighting the eye by their graceful outline and ever-varying play of light and shade, we find the class of work illustrated in the sketches referred to. These pieces called for but limited skill to produce, and could therefore be turned out cheaply, which doubtless accounts

for their having been in such common use. With the steady growth of the "Elizabethan," and with French and Italian models before him, the English turner, however, saw that he must attempt more ambitious flights; how he succeeded in them we shall presently discover.



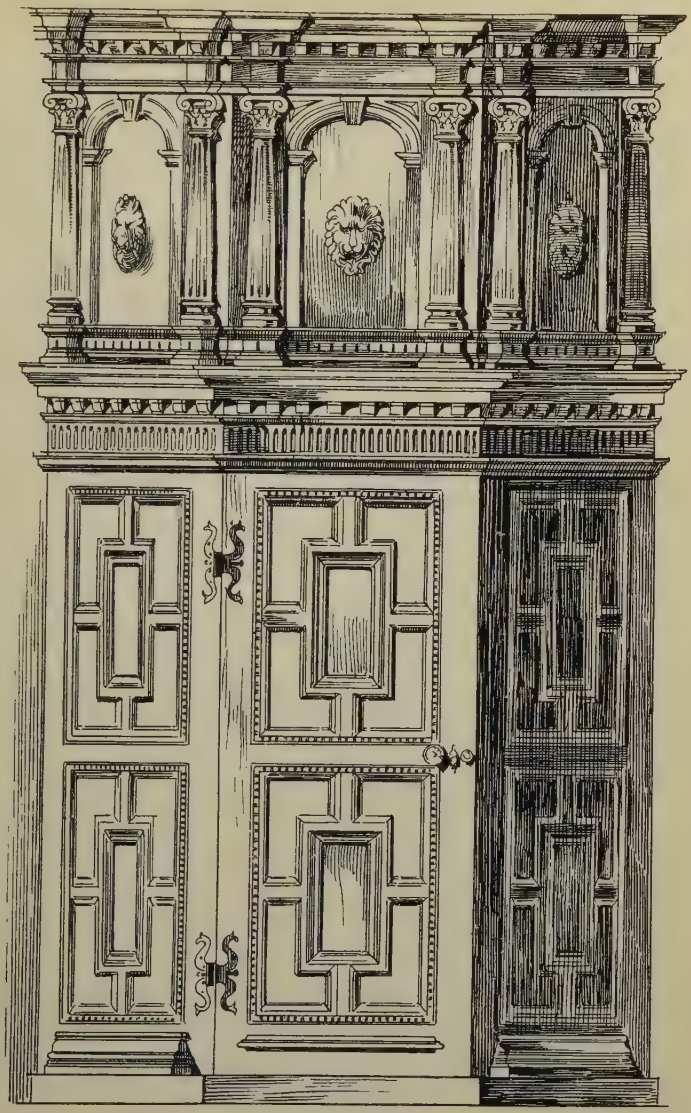
SIXTEENTH-CENTURY ENGLISH CHAIR

(Composed principally of turned work)

(*See page 29 for reference*)

As we still pursue our investigation of the cabinet work of this period, the article that calls for our attention next is well worthy of more than passing notice, for it must really be regarded as one of the earliest progenitors of the modern sideboard, though its many descendants, in the course of centuries, passed through numerous changes and assumed many forms before they eventually became the sideboards of to-day. It is the "Court Cupboard," then, that we will now discuss; and in Fig. 4, Plate II., and Fig. 4, Plate III., are represented two exceptionally fine old specimens of this particular piece of furniture.

The "Court Cupboard," both by its form and method of construction, clearly reveals its early origin. We can see at a glance that it was simply an elaboration of the ordinary, old



INLAID PANELLING FROM SIZERGH CASTLE, DRAWN TO LARGER SCALE

REFERENCE IN TEXT. See page 35, and Plate 4

side-table, with a cupboard, or chest, placed upon it. The cabinet maker had evidently considered that primitive arrangement carefully, and, having gleaned his idea from it, proceeded to elaborate. The form of the cupboard was altered somewhat, and it was made a fixture; an ornamental canopy or top was added, and was supported at both ends by the introduction of turned, or square, columns; as a result, yet another piece of furniture, of a type not previously known, took its place in the Elizabethan home.

Both the examples illustrated, so far as I have been able to discover, are absolutely authentic in every particular. On the one that appears on Plate II., the date is carved to tell us the precise year of its manufacture; but the presence of a date, however deeply cut and antique-looking, must certainly not be accepted without question as a sure guide. This feature has been all too often relied upon by unscrupulous imitators—to employ no stronger term—to serve as "corroborative detail calculated to give artistic verisimilitude to otherwise bald and unconvincing" shams. When, however, it is accompanied, as in the case in point, by certain other unmistakable indications of true age, its presence is heartily to be welcomed.

The cupboard under notice is, of course, of oak, as was all the best furniture of the period; and depends chiefly for its enrichment upon carving and turning, though the two side panels of the upper cupboard and the centre panel of the lower part provide a variation by the introduction of simple inlay. Upon the employment of inlay at the time of which I am writing, I shall have more to say presently.

The pattern in these two panels, and the border—a "chequer" design—above and below, are in ebony or bog oak, which stands out black against the lighter wood of the "ground," while the tulip-like form, with its attendant stems and leaves, in the centre panel of the lower part, is of holly, and is, consequently, lighter than the oak into which it is

sunk. The turning in this piece, I need hardly point out, shows that, at the time of its manufacture, a greater refinement and more variety in the shaping of members had come into play in this class of structural enrichment; and special note should be made of the spiral, or "twisted," character of that in the upper part. When once introduced, spiral turning, as it is technically termed, came rapidly into vogue, and was for many years very extensively employed, and with excellent effect, particularly in the manufacture of chairs, as we shall see in the next chapter.

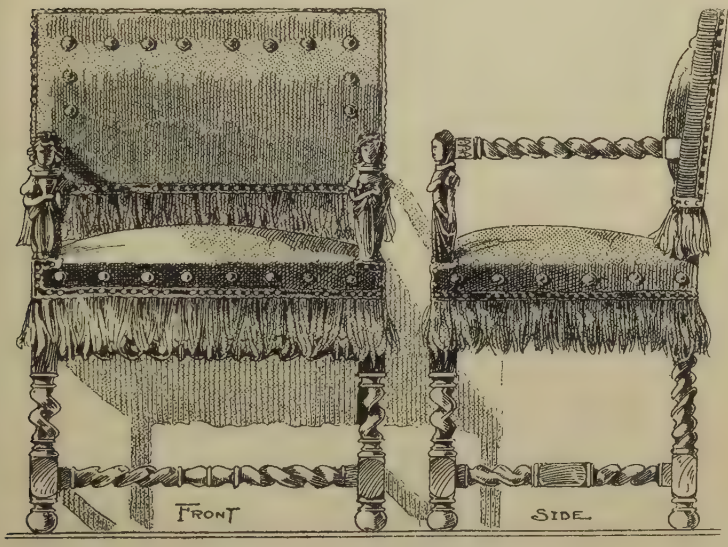
Figure 4, Plate III., calls for no special comment further than that already offered, save that we may note, in passing, the presence of the "strap-work" in the upper turned pillars, and the superiority, regarded from the technical point of view, of the carving throughout. Both pieces, however, may be considered as belonging to approximately the same period.

To return to Plate I. for a moment: the chair sketched in Fig. 2, according to apparently well-authenticated report, once formed part of the worldly possessions of Shakespeare himself, and, so far as I am aware, no cryptogram has yet been discovered in the details of its design to upset that tradition. But, if we view the chair from above, the curve of the arms, taken in connection with the line of the front of the seat, will be seen to form most distinctly the half of a B! I present this important discovery most readily to the Baconian theorists. Can it be another link in the chain? Who shall say?

Reverting, with brevity, to the subject of turning as employed in the construction of chairs, the type illustrated on the opposite page is not infrequently found in the Elizabethan, and later, Jacobean mansions. But, more often than not, it was imported from abroad, and cannot be regarded as a home production. We sometimes see such chairs as these described as "Elizabethan," but their only claim to that description is to be found in the fact mentioned, viz.:—that they won a

certain amount of favour in this country during the reign of the sovereign after whom they are thus named. Even if some were actually made here, they were Italian, or Flemish, in form and detail nevertheless.

Figure 5, Plate I., I must deal with in my next chapter, as it belongs to a much later period; so, indeed, do Fig. 5, Plate II.,




CHAIR OF ITALIAN TYPE

(Not infrequently found in "Elizabethan" and "Jacobean" Interiors)

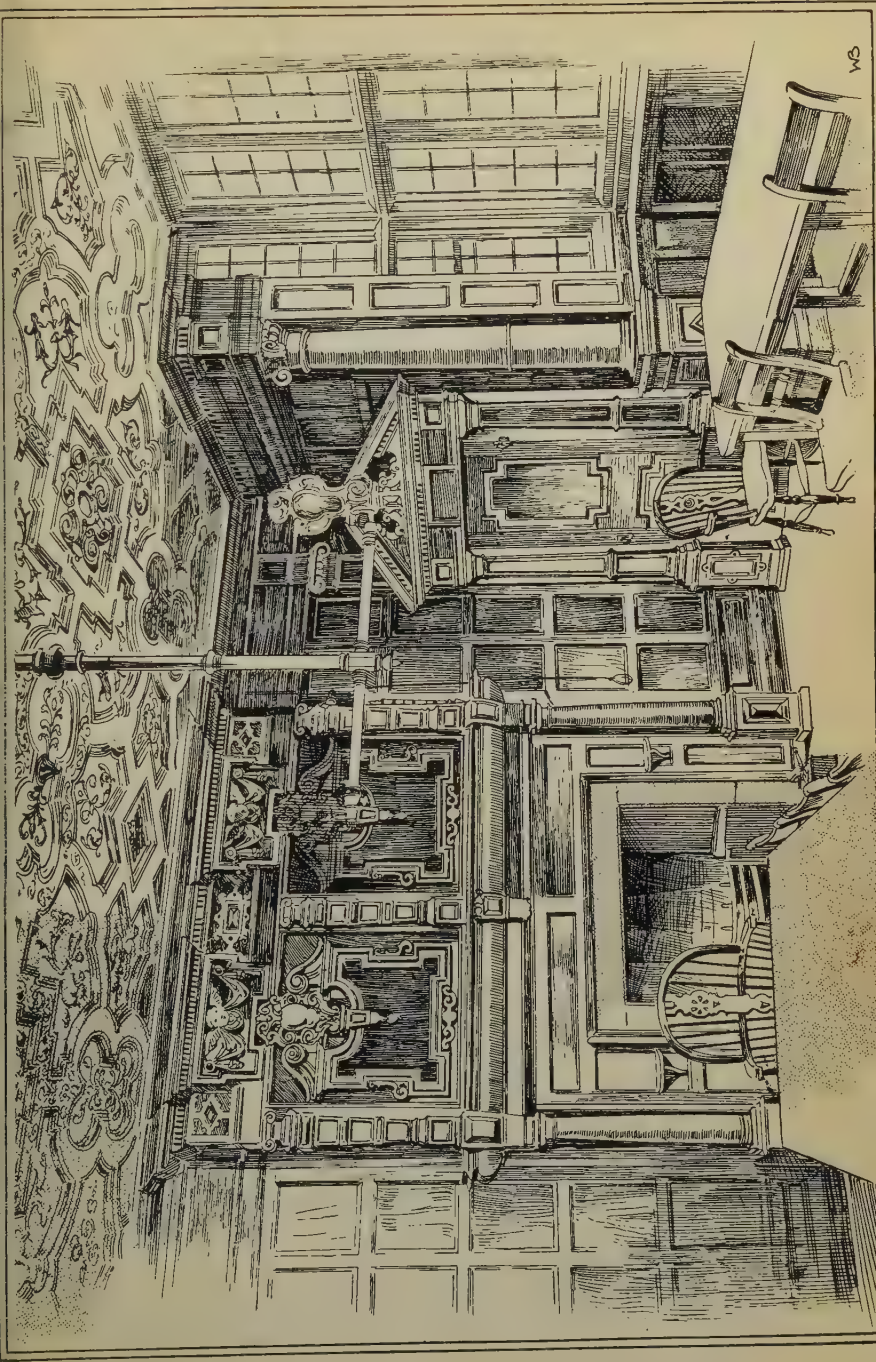
(*See page* 66 *for reference*)

Figs. 1, 2, 3, and 5, Plate III., and the tables and chairs on Plate IV. Some of these, notwithstanding that they are later as regards date than the types we have been studying, retain "Elizabethan" characteristics, and, for that reason, they are not out of place here. This is specially the case with the massive arm-chair, Fig. 5, Plate III., with its "strap-work" carving in the back; and with the chair above, with its tastefully enriched turning. Of these I shall say more by-

and-bye, and I will conclude my remarks on individual examples of the style with brief reference to the cupboard that appears in Fig. 1, Plate II. In my opinion this is Flemish work; or, if not exactly from the Netherlands, it is a remarkably faithful copy of a Flemish original. The style of the panels, with their projecting "lozenges" in the centre; the semi-circular "shells" in the arches above them, and the little turned knobs, "drops," or pendants so freely introduced, taken together with the "building-up" of the pilasters, tell at once of the country of their origin, and mark the design throughout as essentially Flemish. The example itself is only introduced here in order to show the closeness of the relationship which subsisted between the Renaissance of Flanders and that of our own land.

In bringing this chapter to a close, I shall invite my readers to study, for a brief space, a scheme of interior woodwork which will enable them to conjure up in their minds a more complete picture of the inside of the old Elizabethan mansion as it actually was than they could do through studying mere isolated examples of furniture.

The truly beautiful room of which a corner is limned on Plate IV. originally constituted one of the principal charms of Sizergh Hall, or Castle, in Westmorland. The whole of the joinery and panelling came into the market a few years ago, and was purchased for the nation by the Science and Art Department for the comparatively small sum of one thousand pounds. It was re-erected in one of the courts of the Victoria and Albert Museum, South Kensington, where, fortunately for all lovers of fine old craftsmanship, it may now be studied at leisure, and its charms appreciated to the full. The authorities of the Department displayed the best judgment in making this acquisition, for the panelling in question is not only most interesting and valuable as an object-lesson in late sixteenth-century structural woodwork, but is also an exceptionally fine practical demonstration of the possibilities of pure "Elizabethan" marquetry, of which not any too



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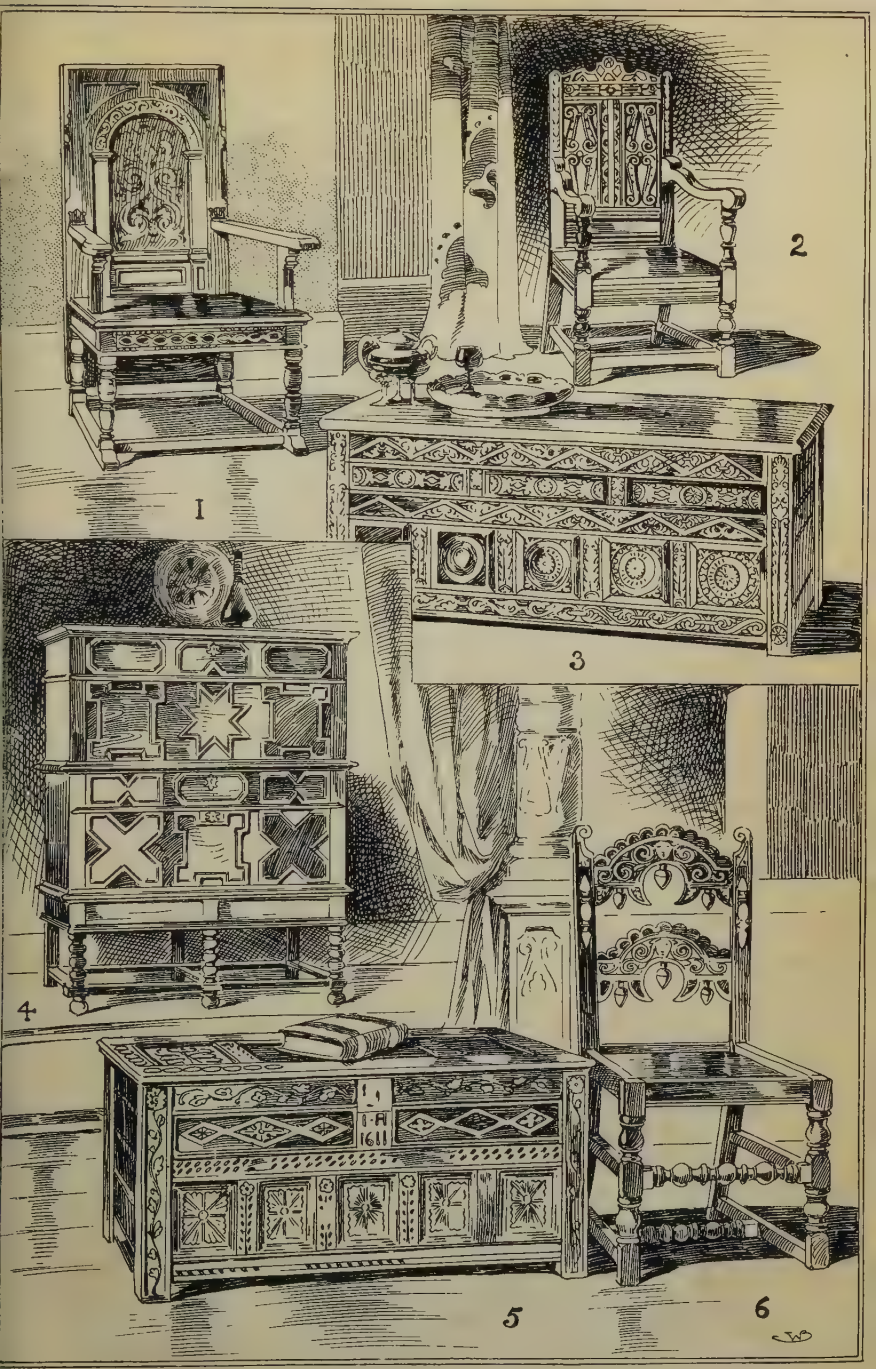
much has been preserved. The panelling throughout, with the exception of the inlaid detail, is of oak; and the general structural scheme, with its graceful pilasters, surmounted by Ionic capitals, and colonnade of arches within arches, is wholly Italian in character, Italian, moreover, of the best period of the "Renaissance." In the long broad bands of the enrichment, which is in holly and bog oak, the effect is more than a little suggestive of the *sgraffito*, which was employed so extensively by the architects of the "*Quattro-Cento*" and "*Cinque-Cento*" for the external decoration of their buildings. The frieze of this room, in the old days, was, without doubt, of modelled plaster; and it is more than likely that the ceiling was decorated by means of the same medium. Time has, of course, considerably darkened the tones of the woodwork; but, in its original state, with the black bog oak and almost white holly, standing out in contrast to the oaken "field," the effect must have been delicate and charming indeed, and very different from that of the sombre interiors usually associated with the period. The long panels with the diamond-shaped centres have the "strap-work" feeling, but the detail is more free and less conventional in treatment than actual "strap-work" usually is. This panelling is of a character so exceptional that I have deemed it worthy of being presented to greater advantage than is possible in complete interior form, so on Plates V. and VI. it will be found drawn to a larger scale. The reader, therefore, will experience no difficulty in marking even the minutest characteristics, and will gain a truer conception of the beauties of the whole scheme. All the furniture in this room, apart from the bedstead, which has already been discussed, is of a period later than that to which the panelling belongs, and represents various phases of a style which we must consider in the next chapter. Another fine Elizabethan interior is illustrated on Plate VII. This may be seen in entirety to-day in "Ye Olde Reine Deere" Hotel, at Banbury. A cast of the ceiling is in the South Kensington Museum.

# "JACOBEAN"

In studying, and attempting to arrange according to exact period, English furniture of times prior to the end of the seventeenth century, we have to encounter, and overcome as well as we can, difficulties that are not to be met with in the work of later times. In the century following, for example, and for the first time in the history of our craft, certain designers and manufacturers of cabinet work rose, by force of their own originality and genius, from the ranks of their fellow-artists and craftsmen, and became known and distinguished individually by name. They created distinct styles on lines selected by themselves, and those styles won the approval of the cultured public to so extraordinary an extent that nearly every other designer and maker of the time was content to copy them; indeed they became the order of the day, to the almost total exclusion of every other mode which was not in accord with them.

This being the case, and knowing as we do, almost to a year, the periods during which these notable men worked, the dates of the publication of their design books, and the names of many of their noble patrons, it is the simplest thing imaginable to classify their productions correctly, and place them in chronological rotation. All that we need trouble ourselves about with regard to them is to acquire a knowledge of the different characteristics by which one may be distinguished from another.

A century earlier we have no such assistance; there is no Chippendale, Heppelwhite, or Sheraton, to serve as a landmark; the names of individual workers and creators of style were not then held in popular esteem, and, indeed, so

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| Fig. 1. | See 54 | Fig. 4. | See 40, 52 |
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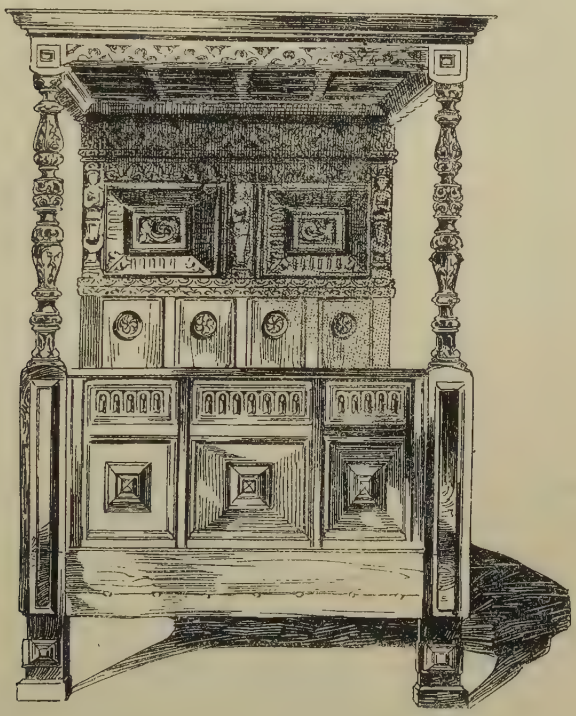
| ,, 3. | ,, 40, 42 | ,, 6. | ,, 55 |

small was the notice taken of them that they were never placed on record. So, in the course of time, they have been lost to us for ever. It is interesting to note, moreover, that it was only during the second half of the eighteenth century



SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY BEDSTEAD

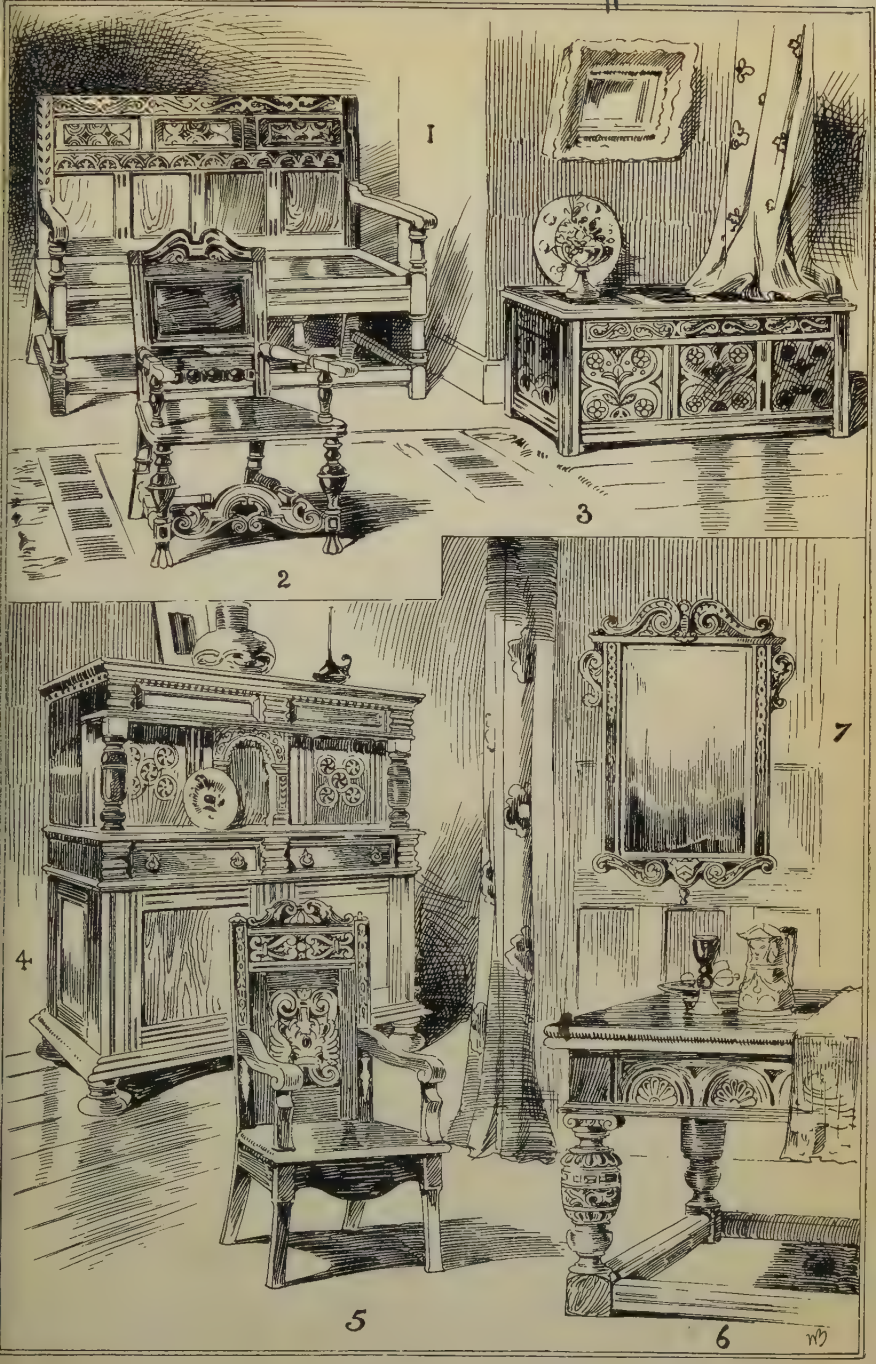
(Illustrating the employment of "Gothic," "Elizabethan," and "Jacobean" detail in one and the same article. Probably "restored," or "made-up")

that leaders in this craft were distinguished from their fellows; for the desirable practice of giving them "a local habitation and a name," which soon fell into disrepute, disappeared altogether at the commencement of the century

following — the nineteenth — and has never since been revived.

Even to-day we are aware, it is true, that our household gods were supplied by such-and-such a *firm*, whose title may possibly be known the world over; but we are equally well aware that the individual, or individuals, whose title, or names, that particular firm bears, though they may be eminent politicians, winners of the Derby, men of letters, or perfect boon companions, are certainly not designers, nor even manufacturers, of furniture; and the chances are that they could not draw a chair leg decently if they tried, much less design or make one. It is to these firms that the Chippendales, Heppelwhites, and Sheratons of our day look for a living, though not for fame, for they know full well that *their* names will be left carefully in the background — as securely hidden as possible. It must be noted that I am not now discussing the question whether the existence of such a state of things as that I have pictured be desirable or not, but am simply recording it, as showing how conditions change in the course of centuries. I may, however, mention in passing that a brave and determined attempt was made some years ago by a number of the disciples of William Morris to bring the artist and craftsmen to the front again; to rescue them from the obscurity in which they have been overshadowed by purely commercial considerations for so long, and distinguish them from the mere "middleman" or "tradesman." The story of that attempt must be dealt with at some length in another chapter. Suffice it to say now, that "the trade" was far too strong for these would-be reformers—the greater the pity. But of that more anon.

In our study of the "Jacobean," then, it is useless for us to look for names of individual artists or craftsmen; and even if a few isolated examples could be brought to light, as doubtless some might by dint of much patient research in ancient archives, they would convey but little to our minds, and their

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| Fig. 1. | See — |
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| Fig. 4. | See 40, 46, 48, 49, 52 |
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| ,, 6. | ,, 43, 64 |

discovery would prove of but small practical value in the pursuit of the inquiries we have in view.

Failing such aid, we must make it our aim to note the characteristics instead of the names of designers and craftsmen, and classify these as well as we can. It will be well for me to make clear here that, in the selection of examples by the examination of which I hope to convey a complete and correct impression of "Jacobean" furniture, I have been as careful as possible to confine myself to pieces actually made during the earlier part of the Stuart times—that is to say, during the period that elapsed between the years 1603 and 1688, a period which, I need not point out, includes the Commonwealth. What happened in the domain of furnishing under William and Mary and Anne, Stuarts though they were, does not come under the present heading, and must be considered quite separately.

In my introductory comments upon early seventeenth-century English furniture, I have stated that, broadly speaking, the cabinet work of that age was characterised throughout by extreme simplicity of construction and severity of form, and it is now time for me to fulfil my promise to justify that remark by actual demonstration, which is easily done.

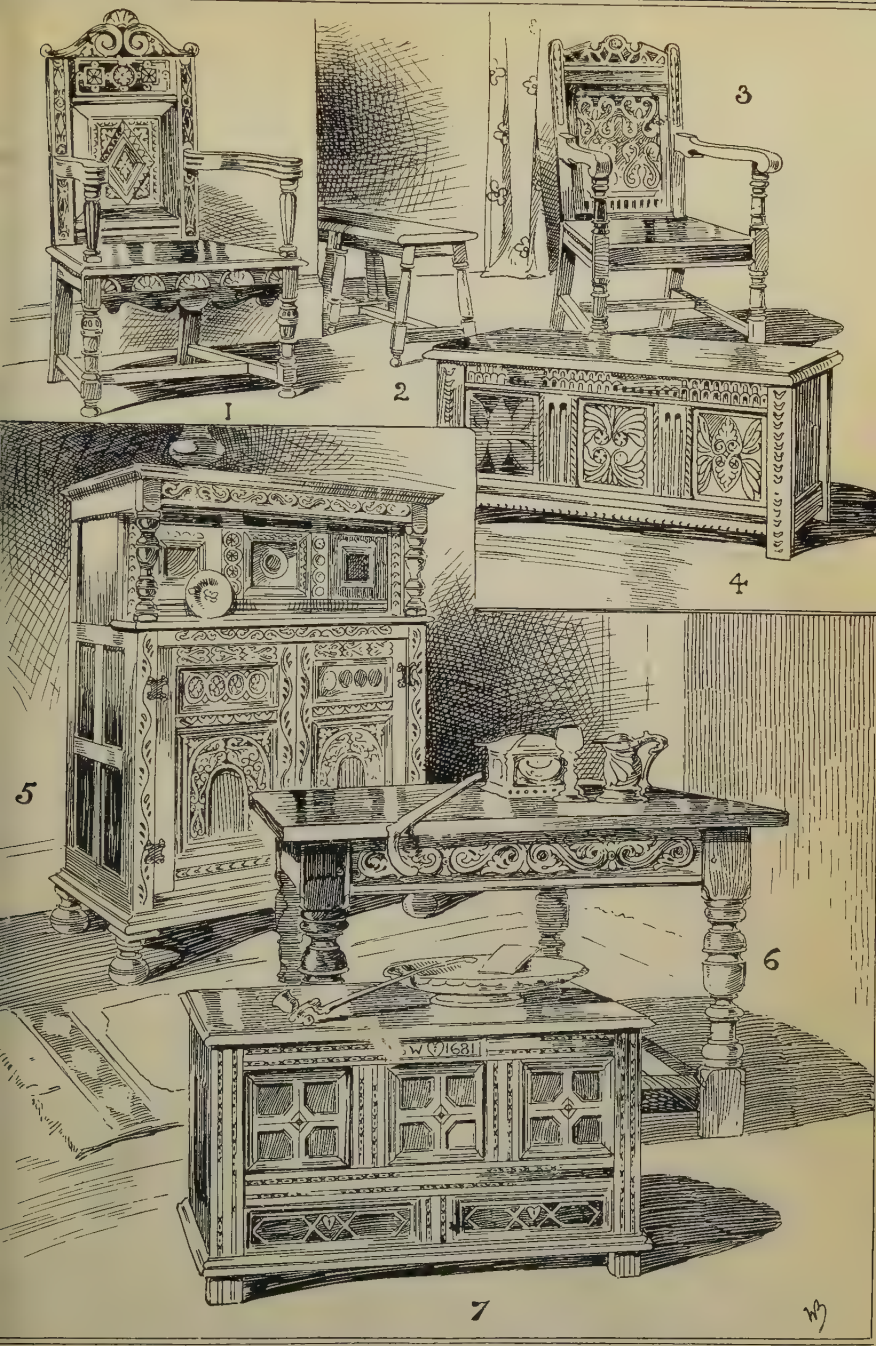
Even the ordinary casual observer, who knows as much about the technicalities of cabinet making as he does about differential calculus, will be able to see at a glance that, practically without exception, the whole of the cabinet work —that is to say, chests, cupboards, and the like—shown on the plates in this chapter, is, so far as construction is concerned, of so straightforward and elementary a type that it would present but small difficulty in execution even to the least experienced of professional cabinet makers. Indeed, there are not a few amateurs rejoicing in the possession of a bench and tools at home who might be trusted to accomplish creditably such simple tasks.

The most elaborate of all the pieces are the cupboard,

cabinet, or press, Fig. 4, Plate I.; the "Bread-and-Cheese" cupboard, Fig. 4, Plate II.; and one or two other similar types; and even they are free from all constructional difficulties, save such as are mastered in the A B C of the craft. It will be clear, then, that but very little study will enable anybody possessed of average intelligence to master quickly the general forms of the Jacobean "carcase." The next step is to acquire an equally complete knowledge of the ornamental detail, carved and inlaid, by the addition of which it was determined, in the old days, that those forms should be rendered pleasing to the eye. Here our task becomes somewhat more varied, and calls for more extensive study, though it cannot even then be regarded in any sense as difficult.

The importance of the part played by the oaken chest in the sixteenth and seventeenth-century home has been so strongly insisted upon in my introductory review that, in considering which of these household gods to deal with first, we cannot do better than fix upon this honourable and honoured ancestor of so many modern articles. I have been exceptionally fortunate in securing a goodly variety for examination, so that every type that can be regarded as in any degree characteristic is represented in one or other illustration. Of these I may say at once that they are, without exception, made of oak, and that the enrichment is almost invariably carved, though it is, in rare instances, relieved by a touch of inlay here and there.

With regard to this carving, a word or two as to classification may be given at this stage. Much of it is of the description technically known as "flat"; that is to say flat surfaces predominate in the design, being thrown into relief by the spaces round and between them having been gouged-out, or "sunk," by means of the gouge or chisel—as, for example, in the chest portrayed in Fig. 3, Plate I. Much more is of the "modelled" type of carving, as in the chest, Fig. 5, Plate I.; but none ever projects beyond the general surface of the

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| Fig. 1. | See 43, 44, 54, 55 |
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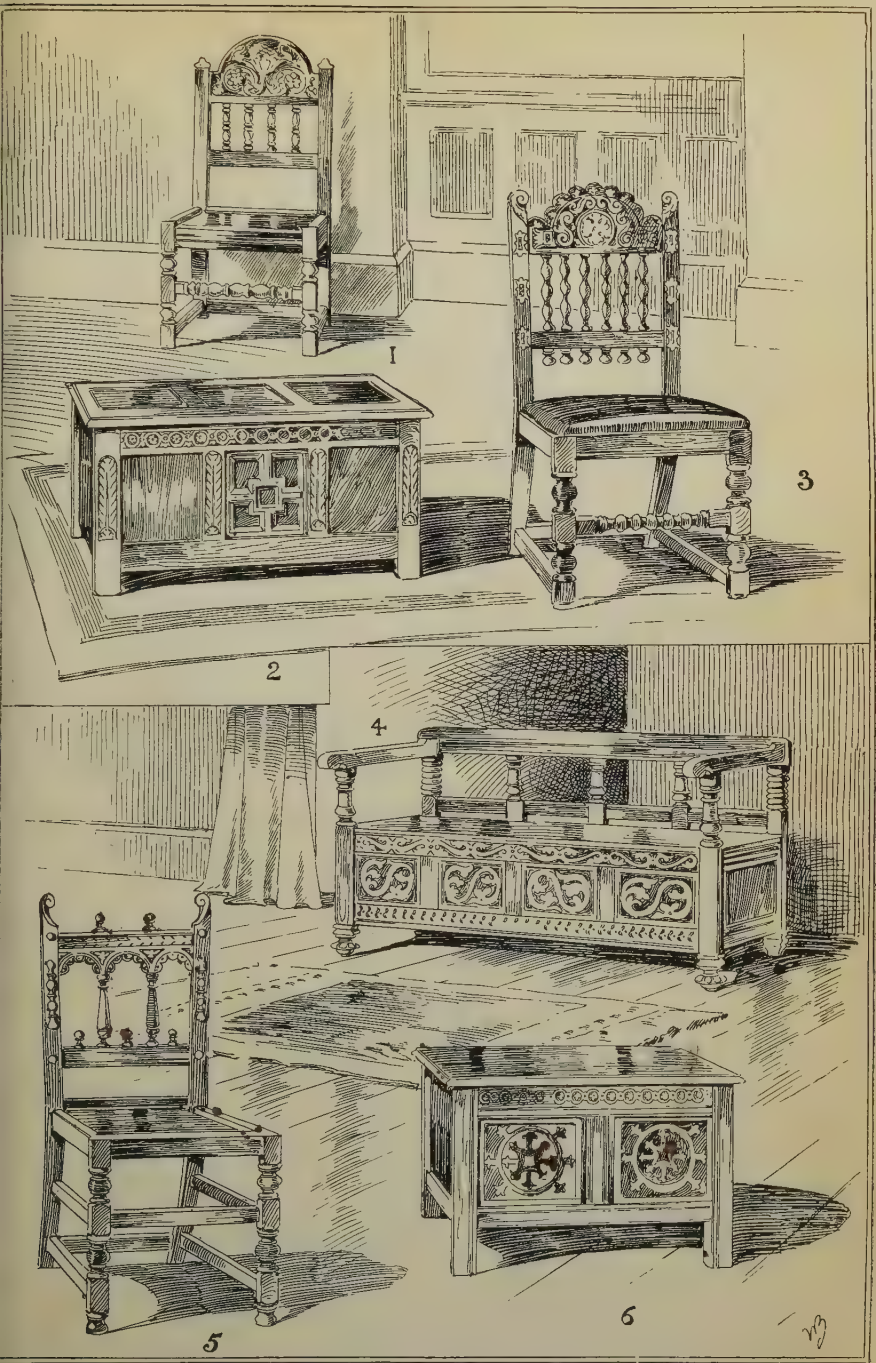
article so decorated, or, rather, it is very rare indeed for it to do so. In order to keep to this rule, the carving, whenever employed in very high relief, was almost invariably sunk deep into the panels, so that even those details which stood out most prominently from the ground were still on, or below, the plane of the surface.

Over and above these two classes of carving, the chisel and gouge, more particularly the latter, were employed in yet another way, producing a result fairly effective, it is true, but one which the skilled manipulator of the tools will hardly dignify by the appellation "carving." The method adopted may be described as follows: The design to be executed, consisting usually of simple leaves and stems, was roughly sketched in upon the wood to be ornamented, and, that having been done, the lines of it were merely cut in, or incised, with a vigorous hand, so that, instead of standing out in relief, as in ordinary carving, they did just the reverse. This produced what is now styled "scratch carving"; and as it was very easy to execute, and cost but little, its employment was most extensive. It really belongs, in a measure, to the same school, technically speaking, as the monotonous "chip carving" over which so many ladies at the present day spend time which might be much more profitably employed, and with such painfully feeble and uninteresting results. But the old work is far more vigorous and pleasing than its modern descendant.

Having made a note of the foregoing explanation, let us observe now how these various kinds of carving actually look *in situ;* and we will study them first in the dated example which appears in Fig. 5, Plate I. This chest, as indicated by the date, "1611"—and the indication is true this time—is very early "Jacobean," having been made but eight years after the accession of the first of the Stuarts; yet it is quite distinctive in character, and has little of the "Elizabethan" feeling about it. In the five smaller panels we have carving of the

"modelled" type, though of a most simple description, and in very low relief. The panels above, with their diamond patterns, furnish us with examples of the "flat" carving already referred to; and the enrichment in the frieze above that, and down the two front ends, is incised. Beneath the panels is a long, thin strip of carving, of a class exceedingly simple to "cut"; yet it comes out most effectively, and was very largely used at the period of which I am writing. Two lines, parallel to one another, were incised; the long, narrow strip of wood between them was then slightly "rounded-off," and so made to resemble what is technically known as a "reed"; in this a succession of notches on the slant was made, as indicated. This gave a spiral effect, much as if a long, thin shaving, or a long "corkscrew curl," had been let into a groove. A similar treatment was often adopted on the corners, or angles, of cabinet work; as, for example, on the lower edge of the "Court Cupboard" on Plate VII. Again, while writing of incising, I may point out the simplicity of the means employed to "break-up" the long space just below the diamond panels, which is nothing more nor less than a succession of "digs" with the gouge. Yet it serves its purpose. The chest we are at present studying is a rather ornate example, but not by any means unusually so. A still more elaborate one is pictured in Fig. 3 above, in which we find a greater variety of enrichment, though no essential difference in general character. The detail, however, in this case, is more closely allied to the Italian than is that of the former, the repetition of double foliated scrolls, "tied" together, reminding us strongly of the "*Cinque-Cento.*"

In Fig. 3, Plate II., we find the double, or "inverted," scrolls again, but the panels below them are of a broader character, and display a freer treatment altogether. Fig. 4, Plate III., brings us back to the more geometrical class of carved panel, the class which really predominated at this

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| Fig. 1. See 55 | Fig. 4. See 44 |

period. This is one of the most commonplace "Jacobean" examples of the whole selection, though the smaller chest, with its quatrefoil panels, shown in Fig. 3, Plate III., in the chapter on "Elizabethan," is more ordinary still.

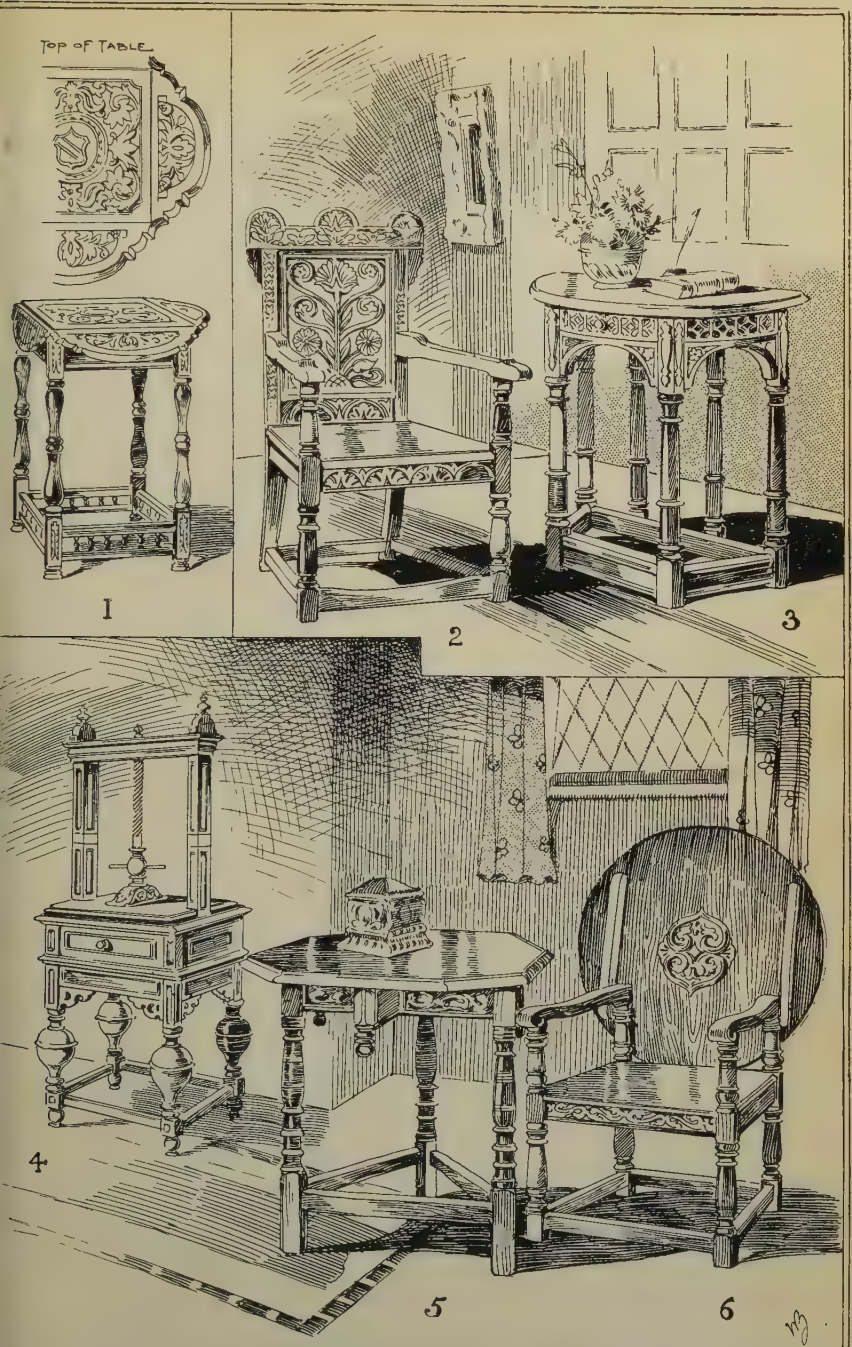
With reference to carved detail which is entirely characteristic of this style, and which appears and reappears with uninterrupted regularity in much of the cabinet work belonging to it, I must advise the reader to make special note of that in the frieze, or band, above the three panels in Fig. 4, Plate III., as it recurs very frequently. Note should also be made of the crescent-shaped incisions with which the end rails or posts of the framing are relieved, and which were constantly in requisition in the execution of work of the commoner class. The simple groove, or "flute," also (as in Fig. 4), was a stock detail; while the succession of circles—the "Jacobean" *guilloche*, already referred to earlier in the book—in the "Bread-and-Cheese" cupboard, Fig. 5, Plate III., and in Figs. 2 and 6, Plate IV., is perhaps the most absolutely typical of all. This last was sometimes, indeed very frequently, varied by the alternation of squares, or other rectangular figures, with the circles, as in the chest, Fig. 3, Plate III., in the last chapter; and in the upper part of the back of the arm-chair, Fig. 1, Plate III., given here. Both squares and circles were generally outlined by a thin "fillet," or narrow band, crossing under and over itself, which gives an appearance of continuity to the whole, and binds the constituent items of the design together as it were. These rectangular and circular forms, again, were sometimes quite plain, and devoid of any further elaboration; but more frequently they were filled with rosettes and leafage, as in the examples referred to. As regards unmistakably typical detail, the repetition of semi-circles, sometimes carved to resemble shells, and sometimes filled with leafage, is another safe "landmark." It constituted a "running" enrichment both bold and effective, as may be gathered from Fig. 6, Plate II.,

from the framing beneath the seat of the arm-chair, Fig. 1, Plate III., and from Figs. 3 and 6, Plate VI.

The "inverted," or double, scrolls, already referred to more than once, will be seen, in one form or another, in many of the pieces: Fig. 3, Plate II.; the top of the chair-back, Fig. 5, Plate II.; in the centre panel of the chair-back, Fig. 3, Plate III.; as well as Figs. 5 and 6, on the same plate; in Figs. 3 and 4, Plate IV.; Fig. 6, Plate V.; and the "Court Cupboard" on Plate VII. The number of these instances of the application of this particular form of detail will prove conclusively that it was regarded with more than ordinary favour by the Jacobean carver. The two remaining chests, Fig. 7, Plate III., and Fig. 8, Plate VI., will be dealt with in due course.

The reader will naturally be curious to see what changes came over the "Court Cupboard" in the course of years, and it will be convenient to touch upon that section of our subject next. As time went on, it was found that the simple chest, convenient as it was in so many ways, had really become insufficient to satisfy the needs of the times, as, on account of considerations of space, it could not be multiplied *ad libitum*, even in the most spacious home. Useful also as the chest proved for the safe keeping of wearing apparel, linen, and plate, it was scarcely suitable for the reception of eatables such as were frequently in requisition. Hence that prolific parent of the ever-growing family of Invention gave birth to the sturdy offspring which comes next on our list.

There is something very homely, and essentially English about the name "Bread-and-Cheese" cupboard which I like much. It suggests the hearty, simple fare of the old days, when the prime object of feeding was to satisfy genuine and honestly-created hunger, and not to tickle the much abused and jaded palate with all manner of unnameable confections. It is a name, moreover, which indicates with sufficient clearness the purpose to which the article was to be devoted, viz.:—the reception of eatables. It must not be concluded, however,

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| Fig. 1. See — | | Fig. 4. See 49, 52 |

that cupboards of this description were actually of English origin, for that is not the case. They are nothing more nor less than variations of the old French, German, and Flemish "bahuts," or "armoires"; nevertheless, the form in which they appeared, and became popular in this country, was in every respect characteristic of our peculiar national temperament.

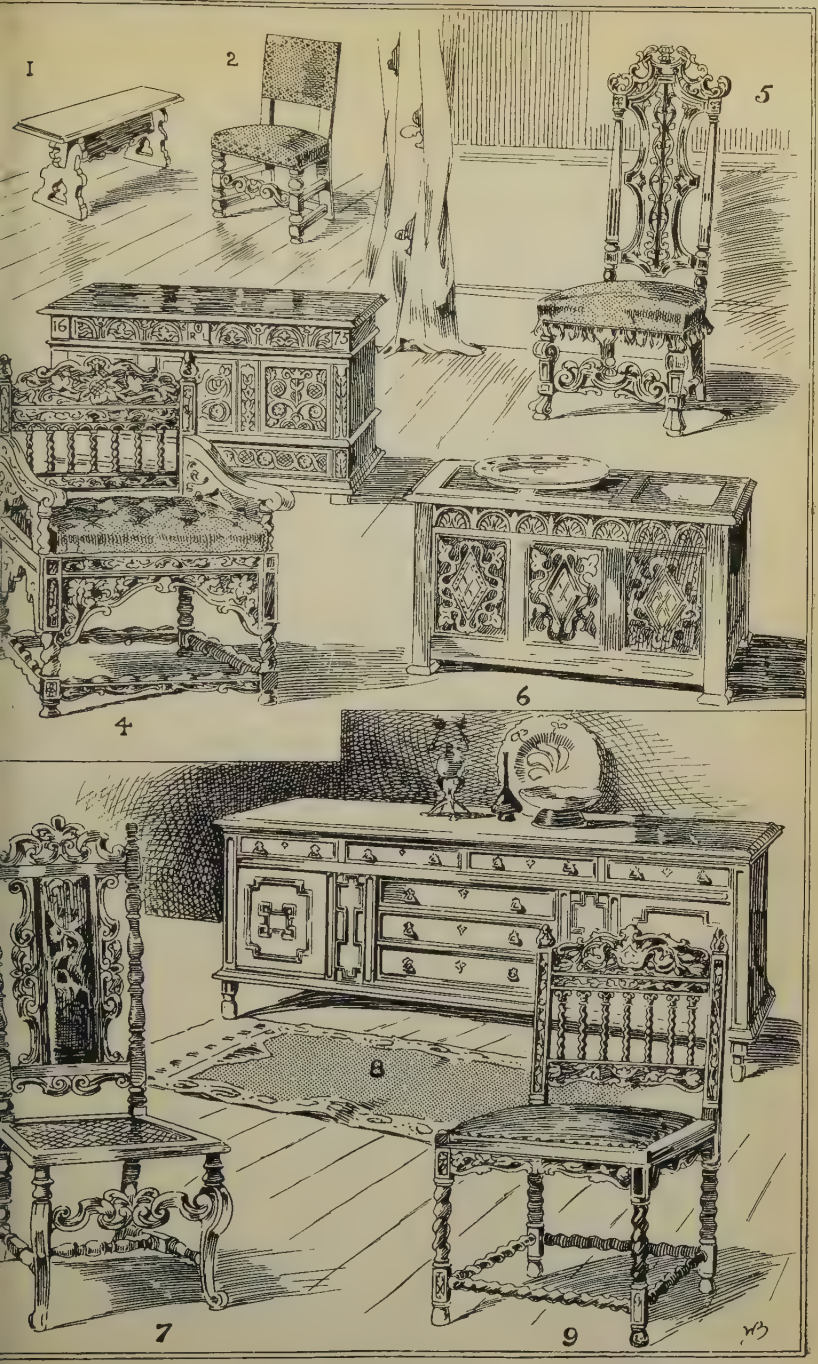
To revert for a moment to the name "Court Cupboard," borne by the earlier English type. Some people entertain a vague impression that it is to be accepted as signifying that the pieces which bore it originally took their place among the furnishings of royalty. That, of course, is an error. The word "court," as employed in that connection, must be read in the sense given to it by the French—that is to say, as meaning "low" or "short." It may appear hardly necessary to explain this, but as it is not generally understood, it is perhaps as well to do so.

Scores of old "Bread-and-Cheese" cupboards might be illustrated, for many are still extant; but the majority bear so close a resemblance to one another that to show all would serve no particularly useful purpose, and would exhaust considerable space. I shall, then, only indicate a few typical examples, which will be sufficient to represent adequately the whole range of such productions.

One of the earliest "Jacobean" types will be found in Fig. 5, Plate III.; and in studying the class to which it belongs it will be advisable first to note in what essential particulars its constituents differ from those of its predecessors. I have suggested that the earlier type—the "Court Cupboard"—has somewhat the appearance of two separate and distinct articles —the table and the chest or cupboard—which were brought together and employed as a clever makeshift, so to say, in order to serve a particular purpose for which they were not primarily intended, thereby indicating the early origin of their joint use. The "Bread-and-Cheese" cupboard, on the other

hand, is in all respects a more complete and coherent piece of "carcase work," and is characterised throughout by a greater degree of homogeneity. On examining the accompanying types it will be remarked that the former, with exceptions so rare as to be practically non-existent, is always *quite open at the lower part* (see Fig. 4, Plate II., and Fig. 4, Plate III., "Elizabethan"). It is supported in the same manner as were the tables of the period, by sturdy turned legs, more or less decorated; while the lower part of the "Bread-and-Cheese" cupboard is invariably closed in—is, indeed, actually a cupboard—almost to the floor, from which it is raised, generally some six or nine inches, by spheres (see Fig. 5, Plate III.), "cushions" (see Fig. 4, Plate II.), or sometimes simple blocks, of wood, or else by extensions of the end framing (see Fig. 2, Plate III., "Elizabethan"). This last arrangement was more generally adopted in cupboards of the cheaper class.

The form represented by Fig. 5, Plate III., in which the upper cupboards stand back some nine or twelve inches from the line of the front, and are surmounted by a top or "canopy" supported at the front corners by turned pillars, is a very common and typical one; indeed, as will be apparent, nearly all the others are merely variations of it. The upper part of Fig. 3, Plate III., "Elizabethan," bears a closer resemblance to that of the "Court Cupboard," but the rest of the structure distinguishes it as belonging to a period later than that in which the "Court" form predominated. Of the date of the carving in the three upper panels I have my doubts; it seems to be almost too delicate and refined for the period, but the piece itself is genuine enough. It is, unfortunately, a very common thing for old chests and cupboards of this period, which in the first place were almost, if not wholly, devoid of ornamentation of any kind, to have been "carved-up" in later years; so that oftentimes only the expert eye and fingers can discover which is really old

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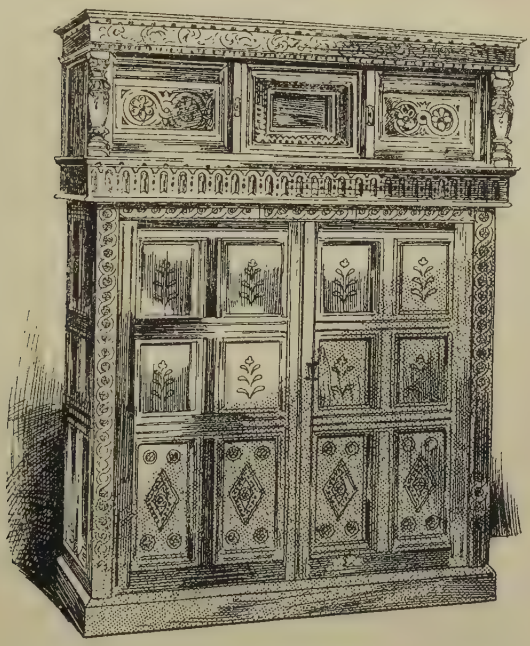
| Fig. 1. | See 63 | Fig. 5. | See 55, 56, 57, 231 |
| ,, 2. | ,, — | ,, 6. | ,, 44 |
| ,, 3. | ,, 44 | ,, 7. | ,, 55, 56, 231 |

and which is new. But "the public *will* have carving," says the dealer; so "the vandal gouge of the wood-butcher" is set in operation, and old pieces, whose beauty rested in their very plainness and simplicity, are hacked about so far as considerations of price will allow, and when finished are regarded as "a lot for the money." So, indeed, they are; a very bad lot!



"JACOBEAN" "BREAD-AND-CHEESE" CUPBOARD

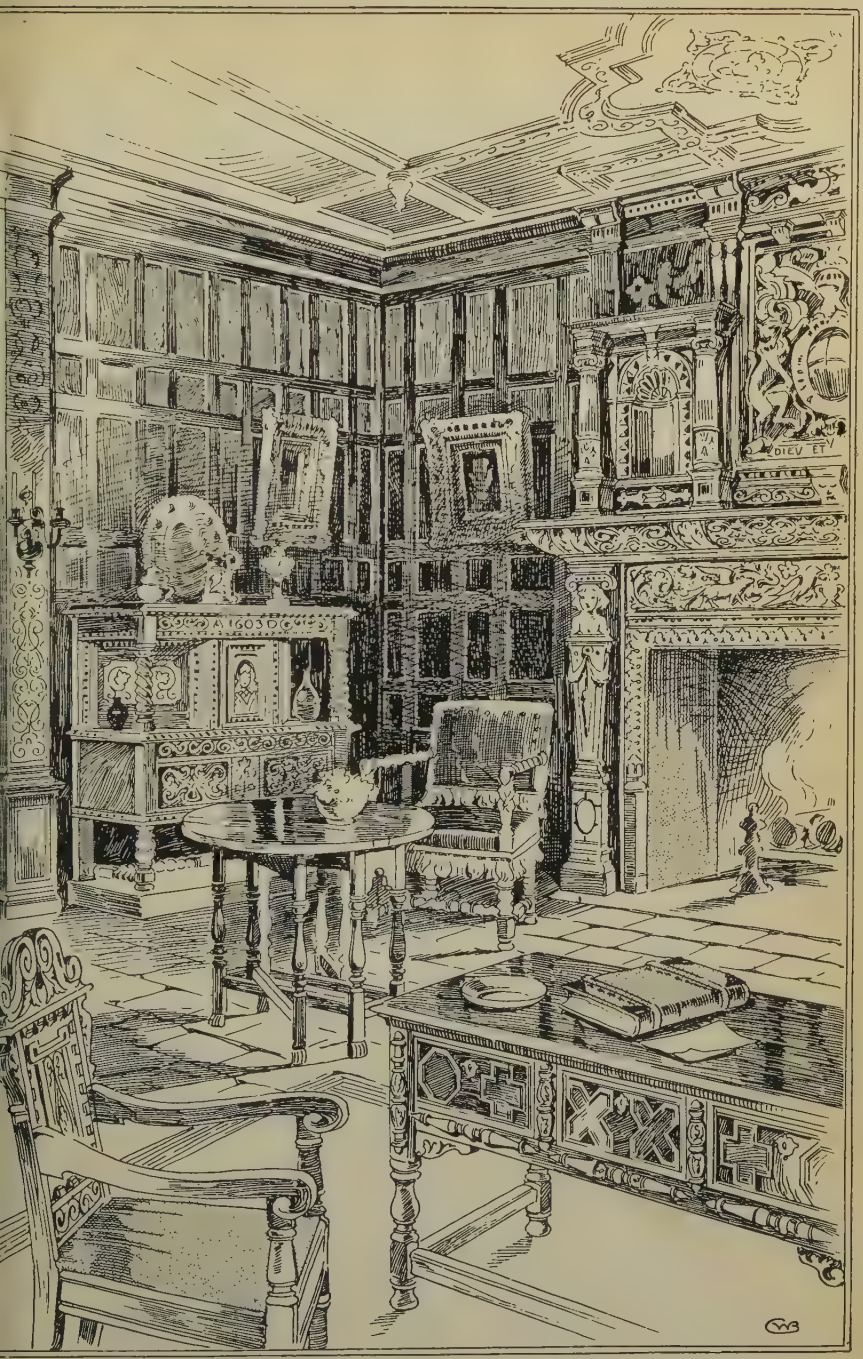
We have discussed "Jacobean" ornamentation at such length that little remains to be said with regard to the decorative detail of these old cupboards; the carving in all of them illustrates the remarks I have already made, and which, I think, were exhaustive, with reference to that element in furniture of the Stuart age.

In the two upper panels of Fig. 4, Plate II., we have the incised *cinque-foil* instead of the *quatre-foil*—not a very serious divergence. All the details of Fig. 5, Plate III., come under our classification again; we must therefore proceed to fresh ground.

Returning for a moment to the question of construction as apart from enrichment, there are signs in the building-up or putting-together of this old carcase work which may be accepted as fairly safe guides where the question of approximate date has to be decided; and it may be laid down as a general rule that the more primitive—I do not mean "plain"—the construction the earlier the piece. This may appear to be a self-evident proposition; nevertheless, it calls for note. Facts which we may sometimes imagine to be generally recognised are very often missed altogether.

It will be seen, then, by reference to Fig. 3, Plate III., in the last chapter, that the ends are perfectly plain—that is to say, merely stout boards planed, "sanded," and waxed; but the ends of Fig. 5, Plate III., are composed of framed-up panelling—simple enough, it is true, but nevertheless marking a most important and significant advance; while in Fig. 4, Plate II., we have quite a finished piece of joinery. This may not always be regarded as a certain indication of date, for the first type of end was sometimes adopted in later years to save expense in construction; but, in conjunction with other signs, it often aids us very materially in arriving at a decision.

We must note, still further, that the more skilful the cabinet maker became in the exercise of his own particular branch of craft—the branch that was occupied with the making and putting-together of parts as distinct from the work of the carver and marquetry cutter, whose duty it was merely to enrich that which was already made—the less was he disposed to cover, or have covered, the surfaces of his productions with carving or other ornamentation. He pre-




PANELLED ROOM, FORMERLY IN OLD BOW PALACE. NOW IN THE VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM, SOUTH KENSINGTON

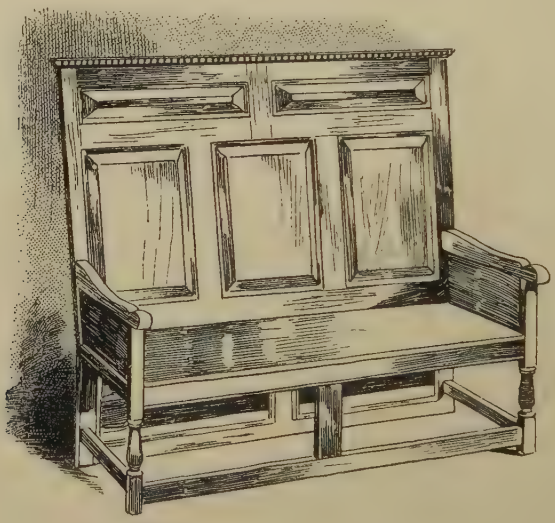
REFERENCE IN TEXT. See pages 42, 44, 49, 52, 55, 64, 66

ferred to let his own skilful use of the saw, plane, and moulding-iron tell its own tale without any elaboration. And a most delightful tale it often was.

The old carpenter-made "carcases," he argued, *needed* "dressing-up" with carving or something, in order that they might be rendered presentable; but *his* perfect panelling, close joints, and clean mouldings wanted nothing of the kind; they were beautiful in themselves, and so called for no extraneous embellishment. As a result of this reasoning, and it was reasoning based on a solid foundation of actual fact, furniture of the class represented by Fig. 4, Plate II.; Fig. 7, Plate III.; Fig. 4, Plate V.; Fig. 8, Plate VI., and the side-table on Plate VII. began to make its appearance. With it we advance well into the Cromwellian period, when the cabinet maker had already come to the conclusion that he was able to stand alone, and to dispense almost entirely with the services of his erstwhile predominant partner. Formerly *he* supplied the knights of the chisel and gouge with what was but little more than a foundation for the exercise of their craft; but the tables were turned, and in the end it came to pass that the carver had to come to *him* for orders for panels and other detail.

It is, of course, impossible to say with certainty that the rigid austerity which characterised the views of the Puritans concerning all mundane matters directly influenced the style and design of the domestic furnishings of England during the Protectorate, but it is indisputable that, at that period, simple and even severe forms came into vogue, suggestive rather of the sober garb and habits of the followers of Cromwell than of the feathers and furbelows of the adherents to the cause of "The Merry Monarch." It may have chanced that all this was merely an accidental coincidence, consequent upon the development in the craft of the cabinet maker to which I have referred having come about at a time when the views of the people were "sobering down," or

perhaps it would be more correct to say, when the views of the more "sober" section of the community found a voice and made themselves heard. This is the unromantic and matter-of-fact explanation which will inevitably be advanced by many; but I prefer rather to regard this change in the character of the furnishings of the homes of the people as a definite and most powerful demonstration of the reasonableness of my pet theory, that the political and social conditions

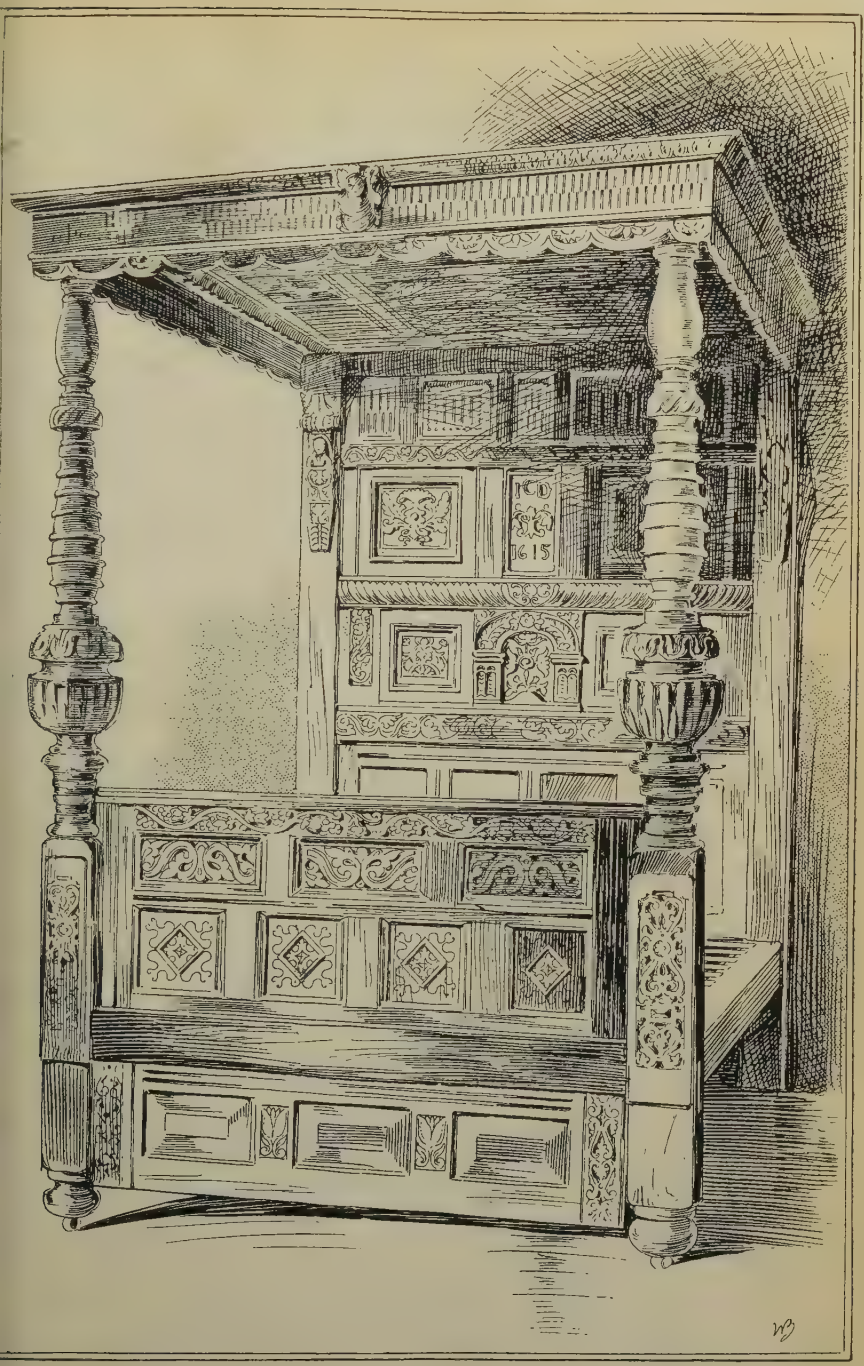


"JACOBEAN" SETTLE OF THE CROMWELLIAN PERIOD

(*See pages* 49, 50, 51 *for reference*)

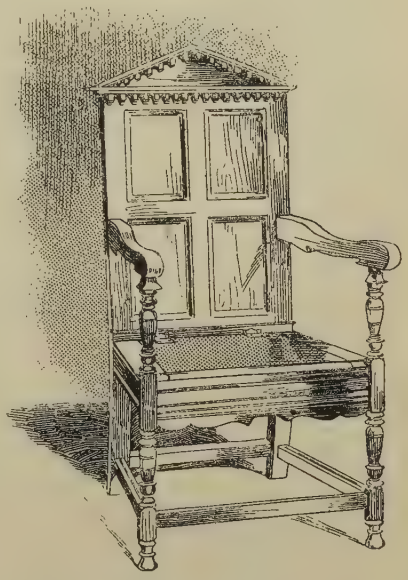
of the people of all ages are reflected, to a greater or less degree, in the domestic environments of the times. But that I must leave for the reader to decide for himself, lest the clatter of the hoofs and the jingle of my hobby-horse's bells get on his nerves.

Leaving undecided, therefore, the question of the underlying causes of the simplicity of Cromwellian cabinet work, we must accept the presence of that simplicity as an irre-




REFERENCE IN TEXT. See pages 66, 67

futable fact, and proceed to make ourselves acquainted with the character of the forms which it eventually assumed, and which remained popular even long after the Restoration. A better type than that presented in the chest Fig. 7, Plate III., could not be found for the purpose of illustrating this. In it we have cabinet work of the very best kind, as distinguished from carved carpentry; and here we see, too, that there can be positive beauty in comparative simplicity. The proportions are admirable, and what little enrichment there is is of the simplest, consisting only of inlaid lines of holly or boxwood —I am not sure which; lines of bead-like carving, and mitred mouldings.



"JACOBEAN" CHAIR OF THE CROMWELLIAN PERIOD

(*See pages* 49, 50, 51 *for reference*)

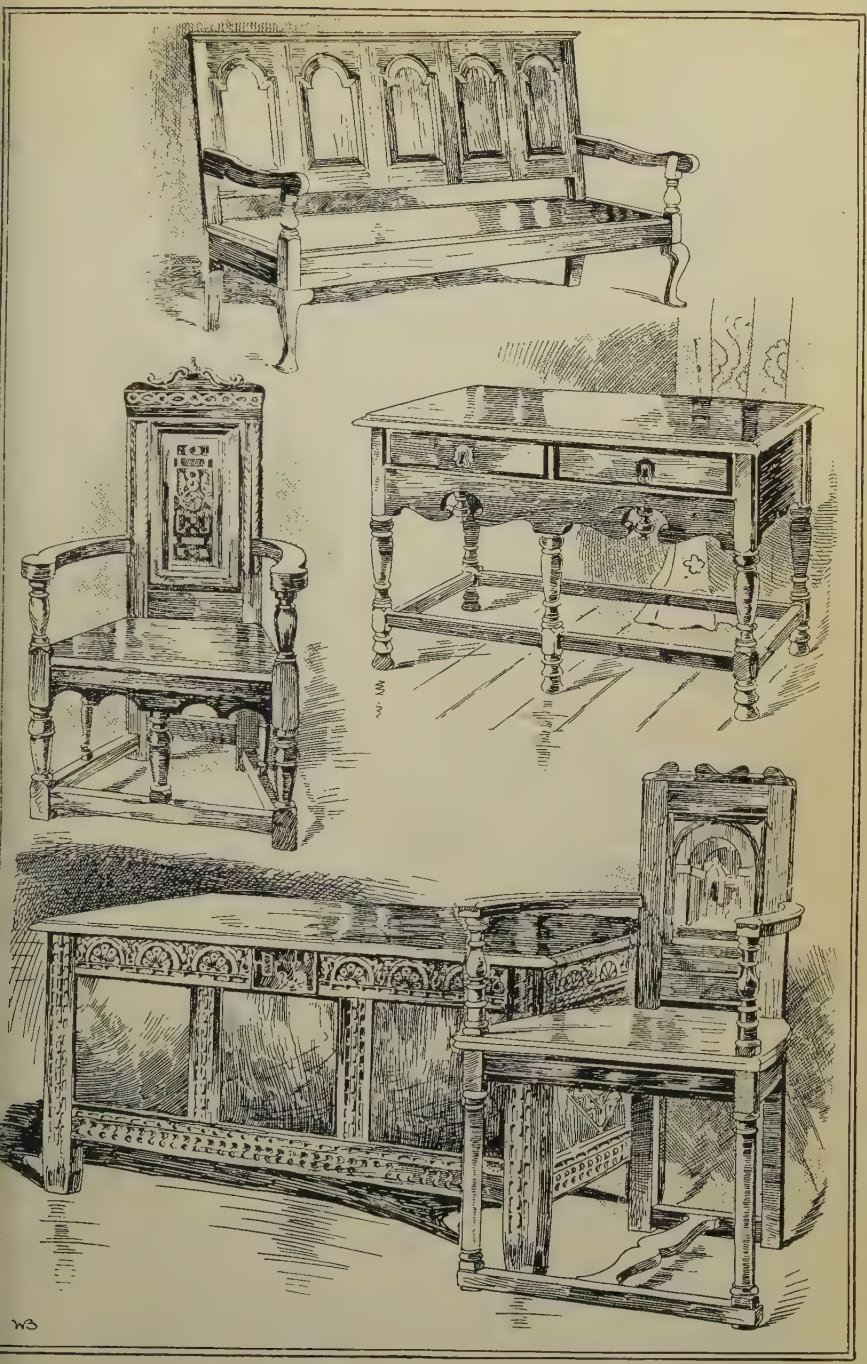
The mention of this last feature reminds me of the fact that it was at this period that the moulding itself commenced to play an important part as a decorative element in cabinet work. This, I think, may be accounted for by the spirit of emulation created by the striking examples which came from the cabinet makers of the Netherlands. It cannot be regarded as surprising that we should have adopted some Dutch and Flemish ideas at this time, if we recall the intimate connection between our own country and Holland; the sojourn of the exiled king at Bruges, Brussels, and the Hague; the events which led up to the declaration of war

against Holland in 1663, followed by the Dutch invasion of the Medway; the treaty of Nimeguen; and, finally, the arrival of a Dutch ruler to take the reins of Government. But upon this fresh phase of affairs I must dilate in my next chapter, only pointing out here in passing that, so far as cabinet work is concerned, the Flemish or Dutch influence is very clearly to be traced in Fig. 4, Plate I.; Fig. 7, Plate III.; in the linen press, Fig. 4, Plate V. (most probably actually of Dutch manufacture); Fig. 8, Plate VI.; and the side table, again, Plate VII.

Before leaving the consideration of "Jacobean" cabinet work I would draw the attention of the reader to the improvement that steadily grew in the character of the turning introduced—as, for example, in Fig. 4, Plate II., Fig. 5, Plate III., Fig. 4, Plate V., and the side-table, Plate VII. But turning is a feature that may be studied to greater advantage in the chairs of the time, and they must constitute the subject of our next deliberations.

An examination of late "Elizabethan" and early "Jacobean" chairs of every kind leads us irresistibly to the conclusion that the days when they were in fashion must have been a veritable harvest-time for the timber merchants; for, if we take their weight alone into consideration, almost any one of them when put into the scale would bring down the beam against three or four of its twentieth-century successors. It was evidently a generally accepted belief in those days that sturdiness—one might almost say "clumsiness"—was inseparable from strength; and just as the most notable deeds of old are associated in our minds with grizzled heroes of rough exterior and well-knit frame, so our forefathers of the seventeenth century liked to have as much weight and bulk of timber as could reasonably be secured in those articles which were destined to bear the brunt of the roughest usage.

The thickness of the wood employed is, of course, partly to be accounted for by its nature; for it will not be necessary



REFERENCE IN TEXT. See pages 66, 67

to inform any one who has, at any time, had much to do with the "working" of oak that, on account of the character of its growth and constitution, it lends itself far more satisfactorily to a heavy than to a lighter treatment; it is extremely hard, to a certain extent "brittle," and by no means "kind to the tool." In this fact we find, then, one explanation of the (to us) unseemly proportions of these old chairs, stools, and settles. But I am still inclined to the opinion that those proportions, their character, and enrichment, are to be considered as reflecting the temperaments of their owners.

Those were days of daring deeds; hard knocks were given and taken as a matter of course, and with equanimity; bluff good humour was looked for rather than refined courtesy; and a man who would be regarded in these days as a model of politeness and culture, would then have been put down as a "pimping jackanapes." (Were not the graces of the French continually ridiculed upon the stage in the plays of the Restoration?) The *entrée* to society was then accorded more to men who could hit the hardest and drink the deepest than to the possessor of university degrees, or to leading lights in art, science, or literature. It is not too much to assert, indeed, that the higher refinements of life were held in but small esteem, where they were not ignored altogether.

It is generally accepted as correct that the stage plays of any age are a reliable index of the manners and morals of the times when they were written; and, if we take those of Etherege, Wycherley, Congreve, Beaumont, Fletcher, and other dramatists of their day—to go no farther back—we shall see pretty clearly that the language, manners, and morals of these Jacobean times at their best were crude, while at their worst they were unutterably nasty.

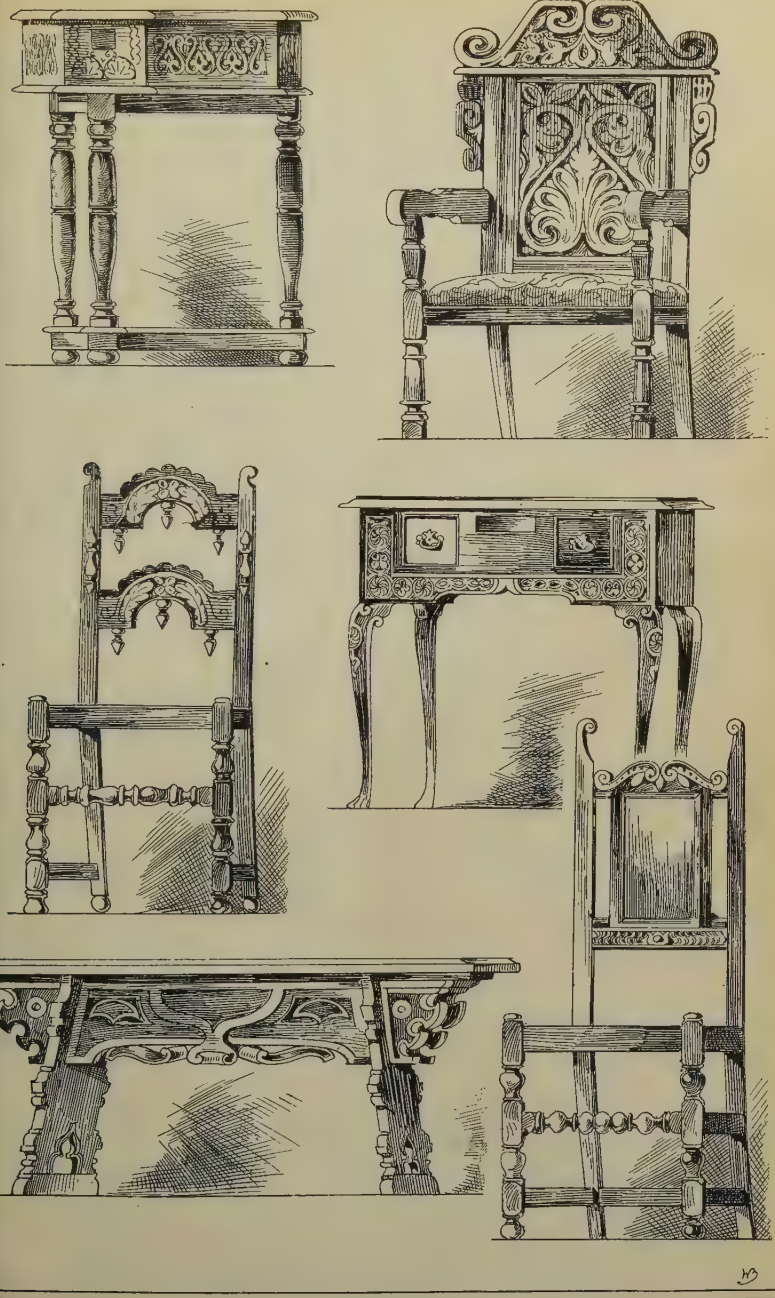
As with folk, so with furniture. Can we picture one of the determined old "Ironsides," or, for the matter of that, swashbuckling Cavaliers, sitting down with any degree of comfort or fitness in a painted satinwood "Sheraton" chair,

or "Heppelwhite" sofa? The very suggestion seems absurd, and jars terribly on our sense of consistency.

As we fail, therefore, to find refinement, or what we now look upon as refinement, in any great degree in the essentials of the daily life of the times whose domestic appointments we are studying, it is hardly reasonable to look for that quality in the material environment of that life. We will not, therefore, waste our time in so doing, but will make the best of that which is presented for our examination; and the "Jacobean" chair will furnish us with ample food for reflection.

The fact that, at the present day, the crafts of chair making and upholstering, and of cabinet making, are kept quite distinct, will be unknown, perhaps, to some of my readers; but there are many indications in the work before us which lead us to suppose that, in the days of "Good Queen Bess," and of her immediate successors, the one craftsman could, and did, turn out a chest, a cupboard, or a chair with equal facility, as occasion might require. The manufacture of chairs in those days did not, by any means, call for that high degree of technical training and efficiency which is demanded of the modern chair maker and upholsterer. The back, seat, and legs were made and put together in much the same fashion as the various parts of the old "carcase work," while upholstering was *nil*. As illustrative of this I will refer to one or two of the types shown in the last chapter—Figs. 3 and 5, Plate II.; Figs. 1 and 5, Plate III.; the high-backed chair, Plate IV.; and in this chapter to Figs. 1 and 2, Plate I.; Fig. 5, Plate II.; Figs. 1 and 3, Plate III.; and Fig. 4, Plate IV. Fig. 1, Plate I., which dates from late in the century, is a chair and table combined, the back being hinged to the arms and swinging over so as to form a table top, on the same principle as that illustrated in Fig. 6, Plate V.—also a late example.

The chair shown in Fig. 2 was probably made some time between 1650 and 1670, as also those in Fig. 5, Plate II.; Figs.



"JACOBEAN" CHAIRS AND TABLE, GERMAN STOOL, AND EARLY "QUEEN-ANNE" TABLE

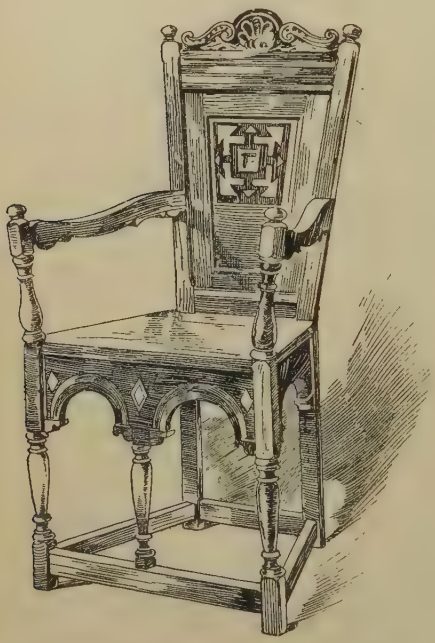
1 and 3, Plate III.; Fig. 2, Plate V.; and the arm-chair on Plate VII. It is quite impossible to say, however, with perfect exactitude, as we can only judge by the similarity of design, and be guided by a knowledge of the approximate period when such design predominated. My remarks upon the carved enrichment of the cabinet work apply equally to all cases where such ornamentation is to be found in chairs or other articles.

It was during the Jacobean era that the chair commenced to shake off some, at least, of its superfluous heaviness, and even show a slight suggestion of grace of form. Some chair maker, bolder than his fellows, had the temerity to discard the heavy, solid back, and put in its place a lighter frame; graceful turning was substituted for a superabundance of carving, and an attempt was even made towards the attainment of some measure of elegance. Thus it was that such types as Fig. 6, Plate I.; Fig. 2, Plate II.; Figs. 1, 3, and 5, Plate IV.; Fig. 6, Plate V.; Figs. 5, and 7, Plate VI.; Fig. 5, Plate I., in the chapter on "Elizabethan," and the rail-back chair on Plate IV. ("Elizabethan"), found their way into the English home. Fig. 6, Plate I., which, owing to the presence of the acorn-like "drops" or pendants in the back, is sometimes styled the "Acorn Chair," and Fig. 5, Plate IV., with its "colonnade" in the back, gained a wide popularity in Lancashire, Yorkshire, and Cheshire, at the time of their introduction, though why they should be found there specially I am unable to state. Such, however, is the fact, and they have become known in some quarters as "Lancashire" and "Cheshire" chairs. In style they are, at all events, true "Jacobean," and date from about the time of the Protectorate, or perhaps somewhat later.

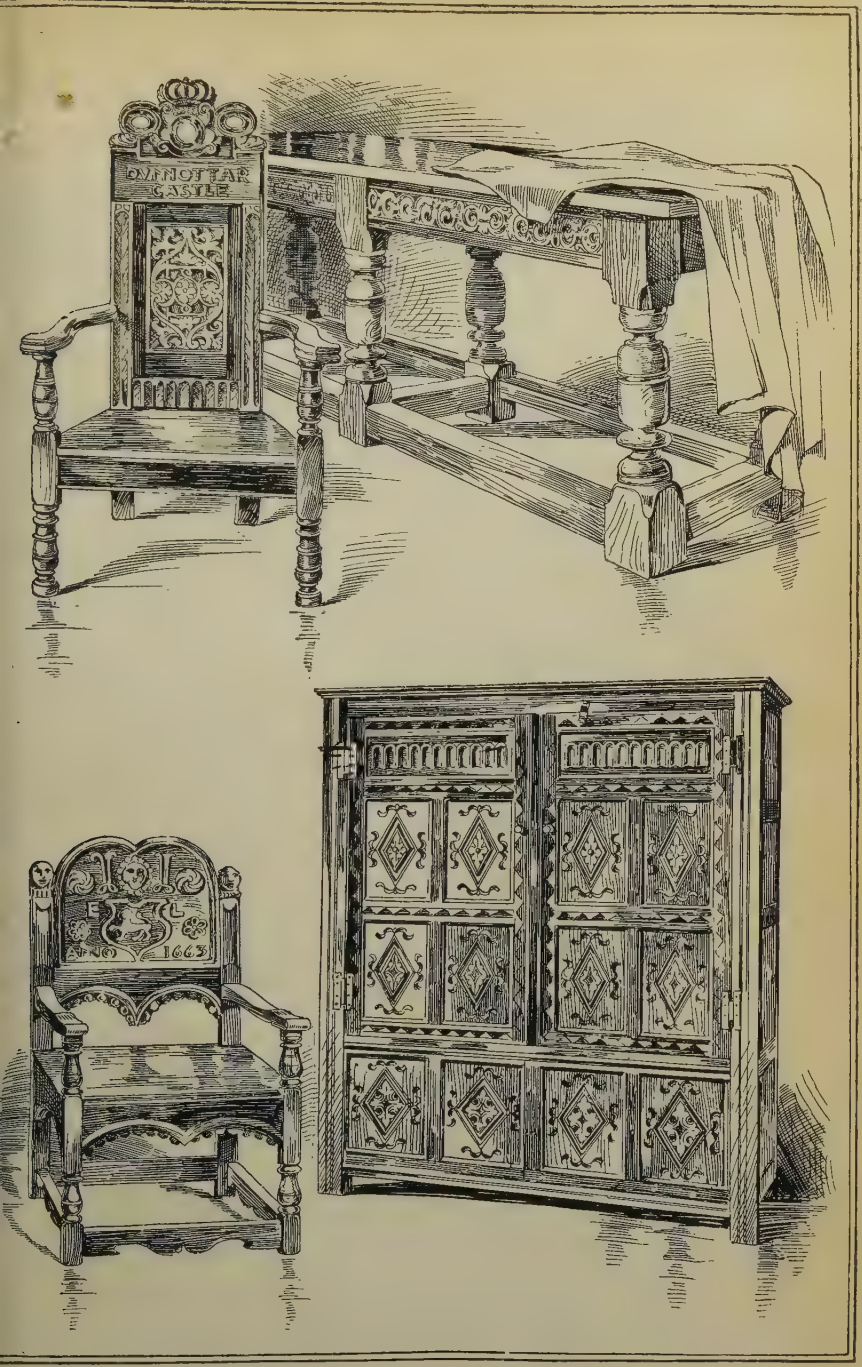
Figure 2, Plate II., shows a curious attempt to wed the "Jacobean" and "Flemish." The under part is, most unmistakably, in the latter style, the influence of which we see again, and even more markedly, in Fig. 5, Plate II., in

the last chapter, and in Figs. 5 and 7, Plate VI., given here.

This Flemish type found such favour here during the latter part of the seventeenth century, particularly in the north of England and Scotland, that it became naturalised, so to speak, and was regarded as national property. In fact, a chair very similar to that shown in Fig. 7, Plate VI., is now generally known as the "Holyrood Chair," from the importance of the part it plays in the furnishing of the historic palace of Holyrood. Four further examples of the same school, and exceptionally fine ones too, are illustrated on Plate XII. These do not call for any lengthy description, but I must point out that in three of the four the Stuart crown is introduced into the carved enrichment, while its form is also employed, with but slight alteration, to constitute the footstool shown. There may be a political significance in this, but, if so, I am unable to state whether its presence was intentional or not. As regards the Flemish forms themselves, it is easy, of course, to trace the French source. Figs. 4 and 9, Plate VI.,



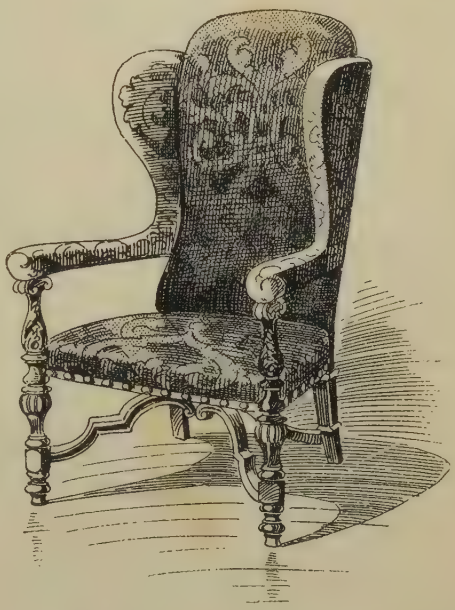
"JACOBEAN" CHAIR, WITH COLONNADE IN UNDER-PART




"JACOBEAN" TABLE, CHAIRS, AND CUPBOARD

REFERENCE IN TEXT: See pages 66, 67

are not English at all, but early Spanish or Italian; yet they are not altogether out of place here, for they are types that were not unknown in the homes of the Elizabethan and Jacobean aristocracy, being imported from abroad by those who catered for the wants of the wealthier class of patrons, or else brought over by the patrons themselves. One is reputed to have been in the possession of Cardinal Wolsey, but that tradition calls for verification.



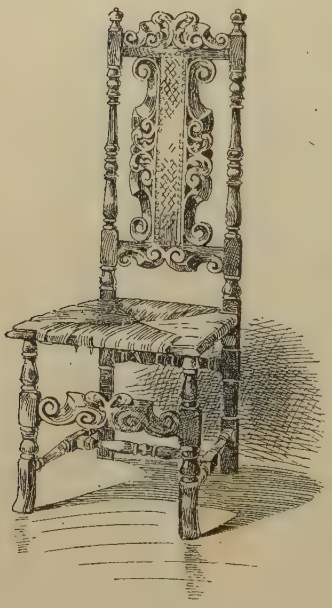
LATE "JACOBEAN" ARM-CHAIR

(Showing Flemish influence. Said to have been the property of Alexander Pope)

It would occupy too great time and space to trace here the growth of the "Flemish" of this period from the "Henri-Deux," "Louis-Treize," "Louis-Quatorze," and also, in a certain measure, from the "Spanish"; but it may be observed that the under-part of Fig. 5, Plate VI., is clearly based on the "Louis-Quatorze," though the toes of the front legs are distinctly Spanish in form.

We might reasonably have expected that the close relationship which subsisted between France and England during the rule of the Stuarts would have inevitably resulted in the borrowing of many more ideas by the English cabinet maker

of that age from the work of his *confrères* on the other side of the Channel than he actually took; but we may, at all events, argue that, however much he failed at that time to take advantage of his opportunities in that direction, he made up for his sin of omission during the succeeding century.



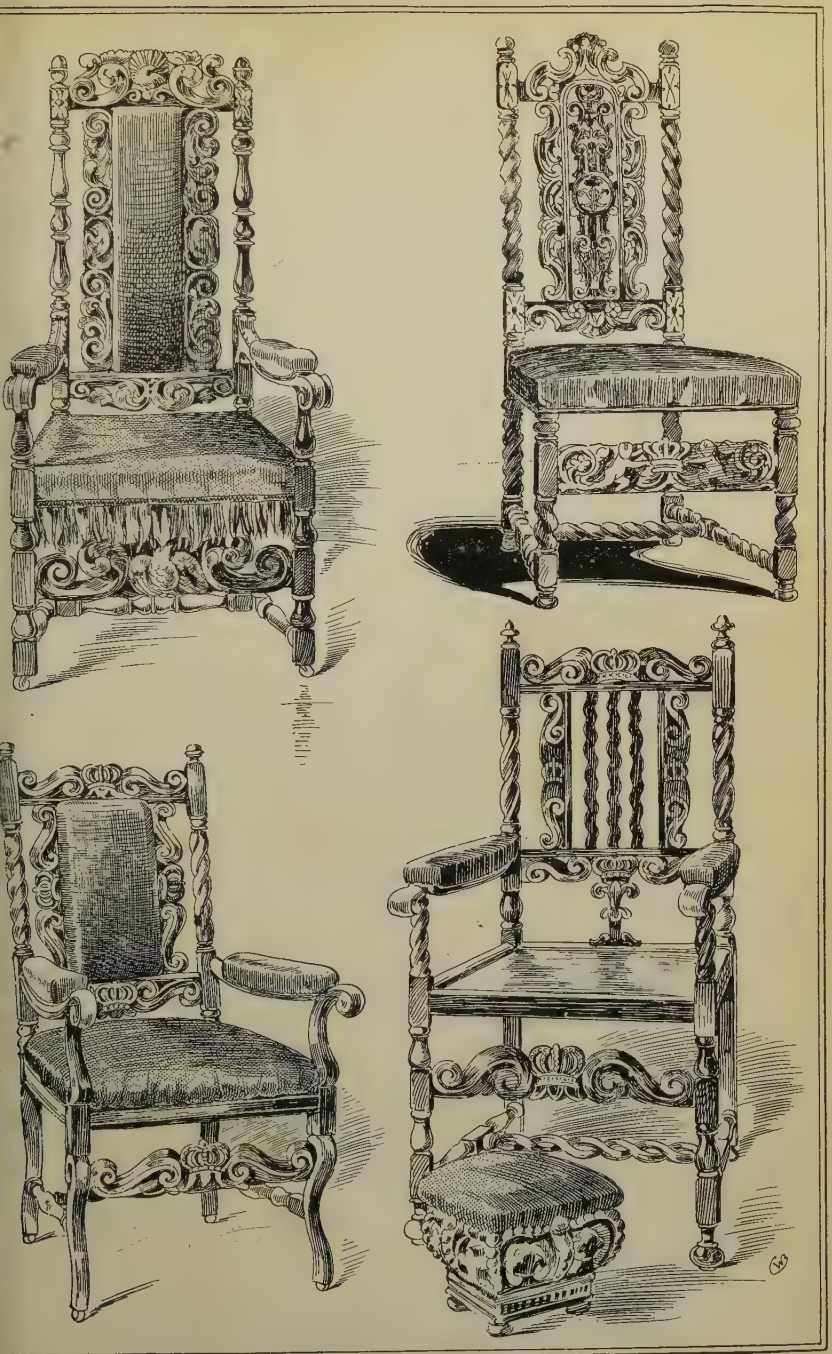
LATE "JACOBEAN" CHAIR

(Showing Flemish influence strongly marked)

(*See page 56 for reference*)

Though the earlier English styles did not owe so heavy a debt to the French as we might have expected, much furniture was imported from France for the court of this country, in order to add greater magnificence to the surroundings of royalty. It could hardly have been otherwise, for it was natural that the daughter of Henry the Fourth of France should desire to have around her as many tangible souvenirs of her native land as possible; added to which, the lengthy sojourn of James the Second in that country would inevitably influence his tastes in the same direction. Moreover, it is not to be imagined that a sovereign of Charles the Second's disposition would be content with our national predilection for sombre oak and subdued tapestry when he had all the brilliant wealth of the Italian Renaissance, the "François-Premier," "Henri-Deux," and "Louis-Treize" to draw upon.

Amongst the French furniture brought over here, par-



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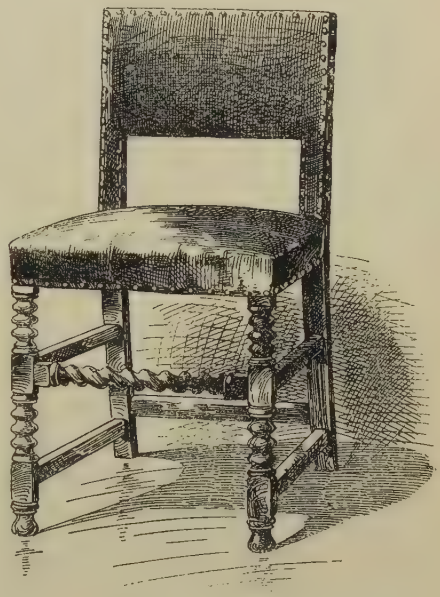
ticularly during the reign of "The Merry Monarch," were numerous chairs of the type indicated on this page, very simple forms, with leather covering, studded with brass nails.

The chair illustrated is interesting, not only as a type, but on account of its present ownership and the manner in which it was originally acquired by its proud and rarely-gifted possessor. The story has already been told by me in one of the magazines, but it will, I think, bear re-telling here.



STUART CHAIR

(Now in the possession of Mr. J. Seymour Lucas, R.A.)

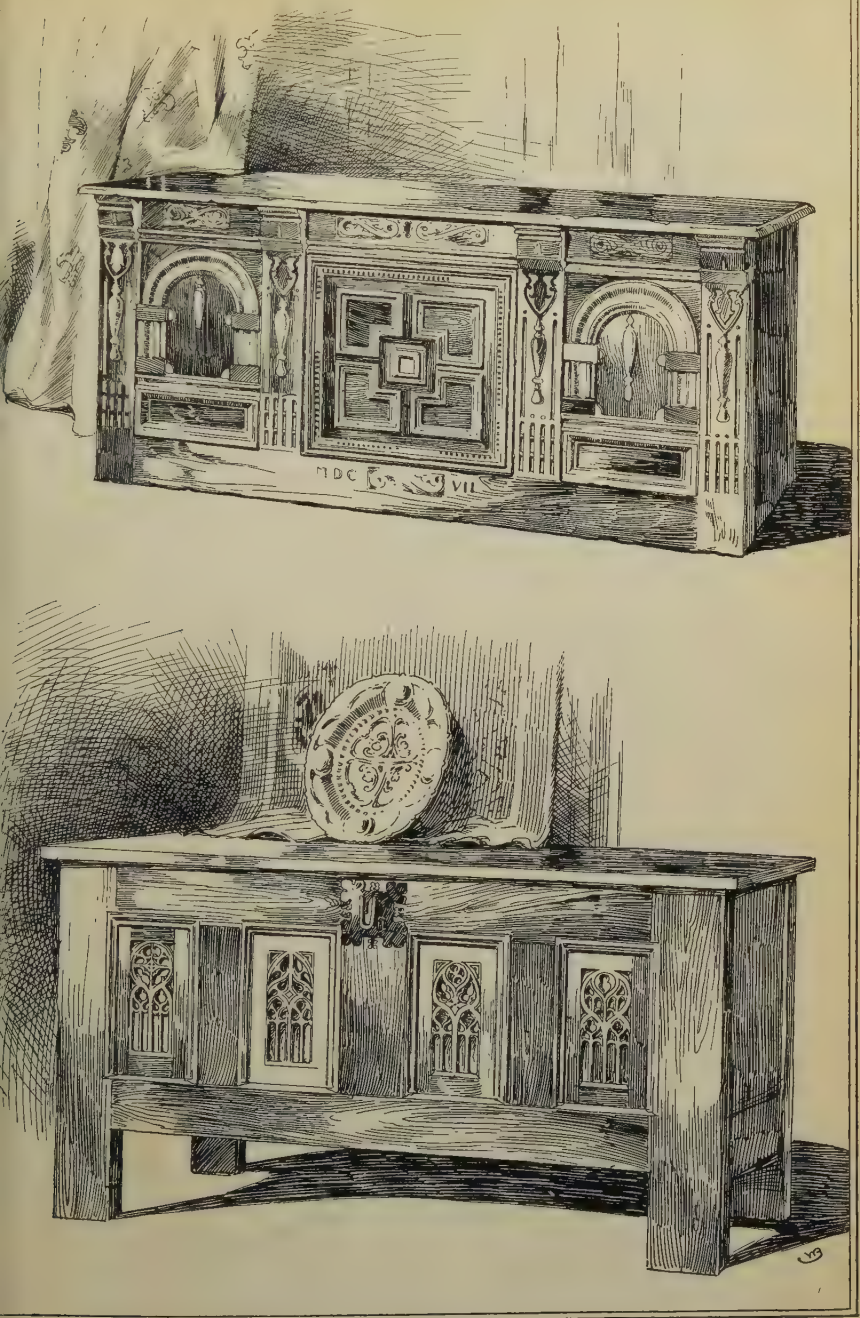
(*See above for reference*)

It is some years now—how many need not be recorded—since a merry little party was settled down in the cosy parlour of a quaint country inn, half farm house and half hostelry, to celebrate a farewell symposium; conviviality was the order of the night. The gathering was in honour of two guests, whose departure was timed for the morrow. On their arrival, some weeks before, they had not met with a very hearty reception at the hands of mine host—a sturdy countryman of the good old-fashioned type, who, on viewing their impedimenta, which consisted of paint-boxes, easels, and other accessories of the palette and brush, eyed them askance as

"painter chaps from London." From his point of view they were on a par with "strolling players" or something equally undesirable. A glance at certain credentials from the Lord of the Manor, however, smoothed over these initial difficulties, and there followed days of work amidst delightful scenery, and evenings of good fellowship, with the host beaming and shaking his portly sides at the wit and versatility of his guests; evenings that are even now looked back upon by those who took part in them as having been "right good times." It chanced that one of the artists could sing a rattling good song as well as wield his brush with rare power, and the former accomplishment appealed strongly to our genial Boniface.

This artist, moreover, had a keen eye for old furniture, and had taken more than a passing fancy to an old Stuart chair that stood in the roomy and comfortable kitchen—the only remaining one of a number, and the particular coign of vantage on which the dog snoozed lazily, and blinked his approval of the evening's harmony. But all attempts to secure that chair had proved vain. Generous offers were made—and refused; equitable exchange was suggested, but the suggestion was always dismissed with a joke; all cajolery proved equally futile. No; the dog had appropriated the chair for years back as his own particular and favourite resting-place; it had become his by right of usage, and was not to go.

The case appeared to be hopeless; but the determination of our ardent young collector was not to be baffled; like Brer Fox, he "lay low" and bided his time. It came at last, and happened on the eventful evening in question. The final libations were mixed, and the host called upon our friend for "Just one more song before we part, lad." But the "lad" was obdurate; possibly he scented an opportunity to gain the desired end. He had gone through his stock more than once; the company knew his songs by heart; he was tired, and "off to bed"; had to be "away




REFERENCE IN TEXT. See pages 66, 67

early in the morning"; and many other similar excuses were offered.

Persuasion seemed to be of small avail, and all entreaties fell flat, until, in an unguarded moment, the interests of the dog were forgotten by its owner, and the sacred chair itself was offered as an inducement too strong to be resisted. "Done!" came like a flash, before there was time for retractation; the song was sung, and with an encore. The host got his way, the painter his prize, and on the next day the "find" was carried off to town in triumph.

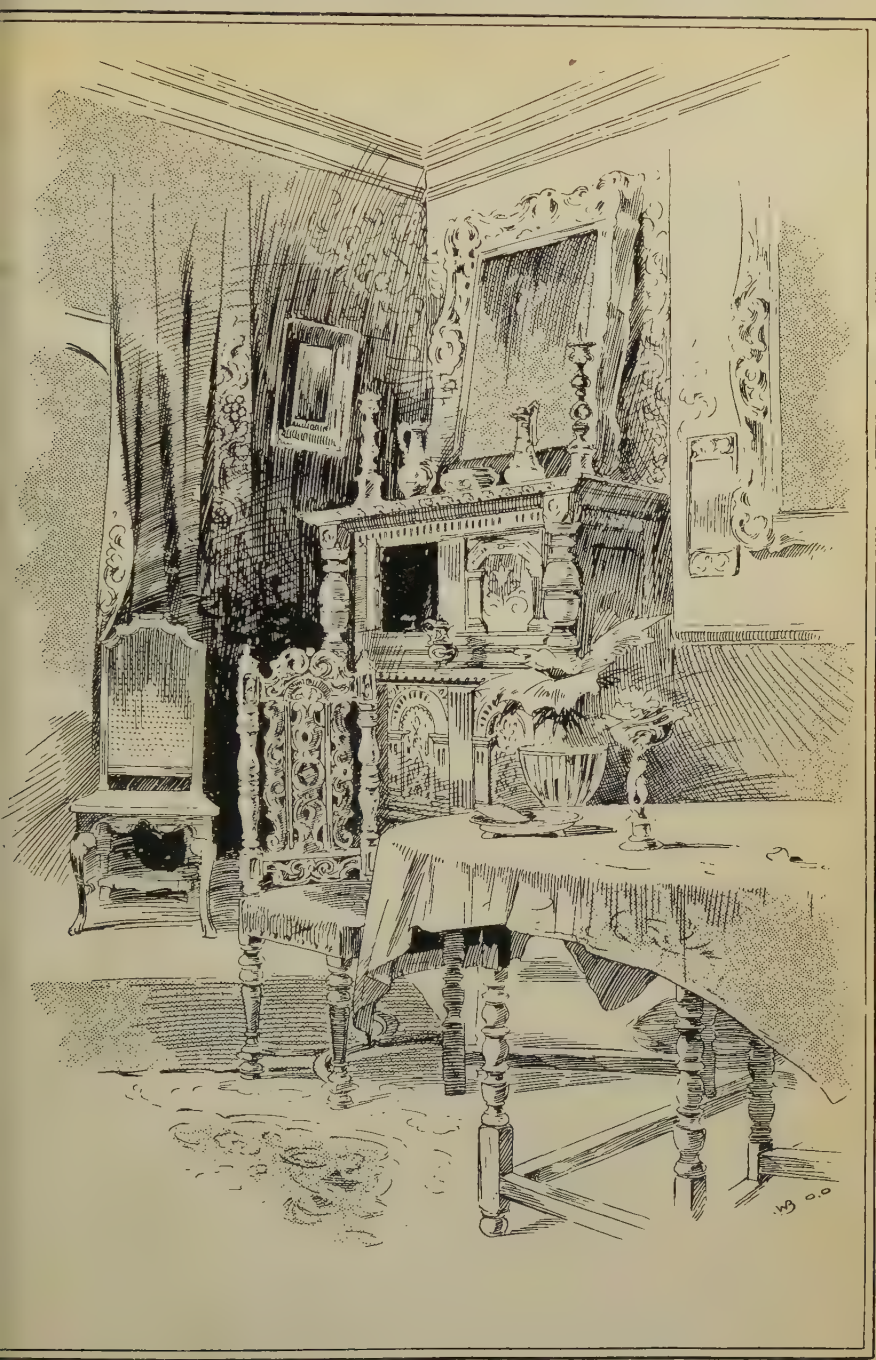
When I was looking at the very chair a short while ago in the beautiful home at Hampstead where it now finds a resting-place, and where I first marked its lines and listened to the story of its acquisition—of the truth of which there can be no possible doubt—it struck me that few more interesting or picturesquely practical illustrations of the saying, "secured for a song," could be quoted. To complete the story, it only remains for me to add that the young painter was Mr. J. Seymour Lucas, who carried, not a marshal's *baton*, but an R.A. in his knap-sack; a young painter whom, though not so well known in the days of which we have just been reading, our Royal Academy has since delighted to honour. By so doing it has conferred equal honour upon itself, for his brush has been one of the most powerful among those which have won for modern British painting the laurels which have fallen to its share.

But I must return to the sterner side of our study, and say just a word or two more with regard to the Jacobean chair, before passing on to the discussion of other articles. There is one feature which has not yet been remarked upon, and which, indeed, is generally ignored by most writers who deal with the subject. The feature to which I allude is the height of the seats, which are, in most cases, at a considerably greater distance from the floor than those of the present day. The reason for this is, perhaps, open to discussion;

but, when it is remembered that the floors of the rooms in which they originally stood rejoiced in no "Best Brussels," inviting "Axminster," or "Art Squares," but were for the most part of stone, a satisfactory explanation presents itself. The seats, as I have said, were higher than in modern chairs, and the tables, for which these chairs were used, were almost invariably provided with sturdy under-framing, upon which the feet of those sitting at them could rest in comfort and in safety from the "chills" which would arise from contact with the cold stone. That the under-framing was taken advantage of in the way suggested is made perfectly evident by the extent to which it is worn away in the majority of the old tables which survive.

When the occupants of these chairs were not seated at table, it seems beyond question that foot stools were made use of; a large number of those handy little accessories, dating from that time, are still in existence.

However pleasing the "Jacobean" chair may be to the eye—and many of them unquestionably are pleasing—few, if any, of them convey a very strong impression of comfort to the body which aches for repose; on that account, if for no other reason, they would hardly appeal to the modern young couple about to furnish, unless some modification or addition in the direction of comfort were made. Whether the popular impression is right that the race of old was actually made of sterner stuff than their present degenerate descendants, I will not discuss, but, at all events, there seems to have been small call during the earlier part of the seventeenth century for the over-done, puffy, milliner's-shop style of upholstery, with its flounces and furbelows, which constitutes a refuge in many modern homes for tired nature—and dust. Loose cushions were, undoubtedly, employed to palliate the relentlessness of these old seats, and endow them with some measure of comfort, but such additions came as an afterthought, and played no part in the designer's original scheme.



CORNER FROM MR. ROBERT SAUBER'S DINING-ROOM, SHOWING "JACOBEAN" CHAIRS, "BREAD-AND-CHEESE" CUPBOARD, AND "GATE-LEG" TABLE

REFERENCE IN TEXT. See pages 66, 67

We have become so accustomed to the luxury—we might almost say effeminate luxury—which has found its way here from across the Channel, that we hardly dare hope a revival of such models as those in question would meet with popular favour nowadays. Yet we cannot but accord them our admiration, nor can we resist the temptation to add as many to our collections as means and opportunity will permit.

It is a common error to suppose that most of the sixteenth and seventeenth-century woodwork, such as I have depicted here, was formerly to be seen only in the houses of the nobility. There is every reason to believe, on the contrary, that so far from that being the case, it was generally to be found in the houses of the middle classes—of prosperous farmers and well-to-do tradesmen.

In making my selection, I have been careful to keep this point in view, for one of the chief objects of this book is to convey as complete an idea as possible of the average English home during the last three centuries, and not of exceptional examples of the craft of the cabinet and chair maker, which were designed and produced for palace and mansion. As may be imagined, these, even so far back as the sixteenth century, were magnificent beyond description. Spenser, in his "Faerie Queene," tells us :—

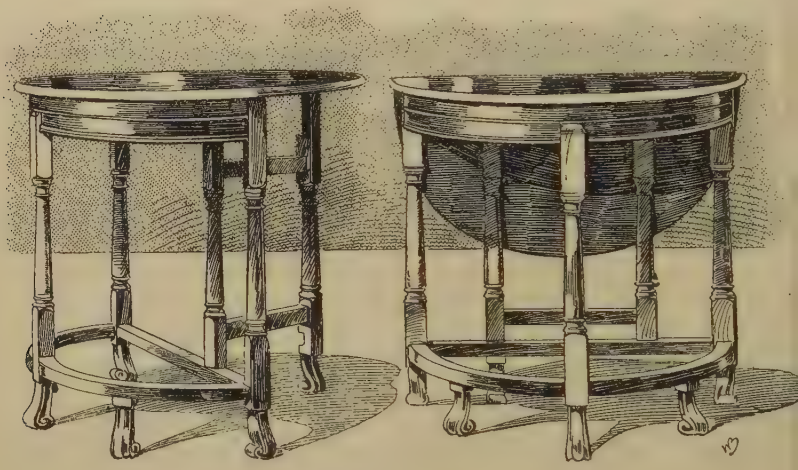
> "For th' antique world excess and pride did hate;
> Such proud luxurious pomp is swollen up but late";

and the study of the inventories of the belongings of the Elizabethan "upper ten" clearly proves that they loved to surround themselves with all the masterpieces of art and craftsmanship which could be brought from countries whose skilled workers were renowned for the creation of luxurious and beautiful things.

There are, however, further illustrations awaiting comment. The stool that appears in Fig. 1, Plate VI., recalls strongly the old monastic days, and might have come from

Glastonbury Abbey itself; while that in Fig. 2, Plate III., is a sensible, and by no means ungraceful, "Jacobean" form.

All the tables designed and manufactured during the greater part of the seventeenth century bear a very strong resemblance to one another, though we find what might be described as "the fat and the lean kine" among them. Notwithstanding this, all share the cardinal characteristics we have discussed in company with other articles of "Jacobean"



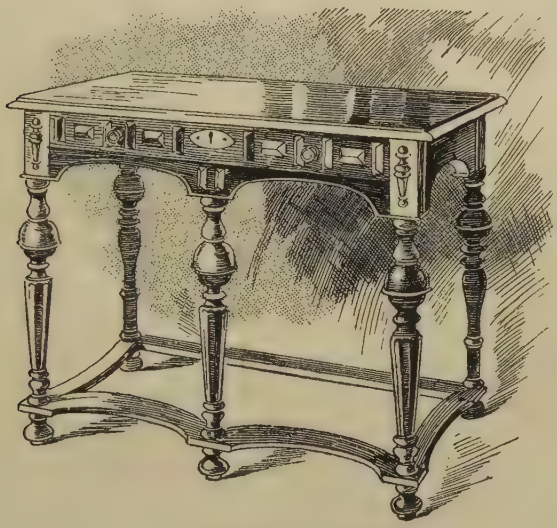
JACOBEAN "GATE" OR "GATE-LEG" TABLE

(*See below for reference*)

furniture, and they may, therefore, easily be recognised. The earlier types are heavier, generally more crude in construction, and enriched to a greater extent with carving, as in Fig. 6, Plate II., and Fig. 6, Plate III. Later, the proportions become slighter, the turning of greatly improved design, and more graceful; and variations upon the simple rectangular form are made, as in Figs. 3 and 5, Plate V., and the folding "Gate Table," on Plate VII., so called on account of the way

in which the legs fold together to permit of the hinged side "leaves" of the circular top falling down for economy of space. Another example of a similar type is illustrated on the preceding page.

In the foregoing illustrations and the comments on them it has been my endeavour to present as exhaustive a summary



LATE STUART TABLE
(Showing Flemish influence)

and analysis of the leading characteristics of Stuart furniture as is possible within the limits imposed upon me by considerations of space. If the forms and details we have examined be retained in the mind's eye, it will be quite simple for anyone to identify any piece which was designed or produced in this country during the period that elapsed between 1600 and 1680 or 1690; providing, of course, that it be not

some eccentric exception to every rule which then prevailed, and so impossible to tabulate under accepted and duly specified headings.

To illustrate every article of furniture belonging to that age, with all their innumerable minor variations of form and detail, is obviously quite impossible; fortunately it is not at all necessary for me to do so in order to attain the end I have in view. Our requirements will be fully met by a careful study of the standard models of every phase of style in vogue at any period we may be discussing, and by comparison with these every other piece may be judged, its style discovered, and its approximate date determined.

The next illustration in this chapter (Plate VII.) conveys a capital impression of the class of interior woodwork that prevailed in the homes of those who were able to afford such luxuries in Elizabethan and Stuart days. The mantel—a fine study in "Elizabethan"—and the panelling are now in the Victoria and Albert Museum, South Kensington; originally they were designed and put together for old Bow Palace, at the demolition of which they were fortunately "rescued" and secured for the nation by the Science and Art Department. It will be observed that the panelling itself is of the very simplest character, though the main pilasters are enriched with the "inverted" scrolls which, as I have pointed out, were very generally employed, and were most typical of "Jacobean" detail. For the rest, as regards this plate, I need only draw attention to the arm-chair by the fireplace, which is a repetition of the same type as that illustrated on page 33, and, as I have said, was not uncommon in the English mansion of Elizabethan and Stuart times.

The illustrations on the plates we have considered practically exhaust all the really characteristic types of the Stuart period, and those which follow, on Plates VIII. to XIV., are simply additional examples presented to give a fuller idea of variations in detail, and in combinations of detail, such as

will be met with frequently by the student. The bedstead on Plate VIII. is dated 1615, but bears evidence of reconstruction. Indeed, it is not improbable that the panelling at the foot was originally made for a chest. Piecing-together of this kind was not at all uncommon. The two arm-chairs on Plate IX. bring us to the "Shakespeare" type again, and might, perhaps, be more fitly described as "Elizabethan" rather than "Jacobean," though, so far as style is concerned, either description would apply. The stool on Plate X. may be put down as seventeenth-century German work, and partakes strongly of the Gothic feeling. The two chests on Plate XIII. are reproduced by permission of their present possessor, Mr. Jas. F. Sullivan—"Jassef" as he delights to sign himself in his merry conceits—and are pieces to excite the spirit of envy in the breast of the collector. The first, dated 1607, shows how early in the century the Flemish influence was at work in this country, while the second almost reconciles us to the introduction of Gothic detail into domestic furniture. On Plate XIV. we have a delightful grouping of fine old "Jacobean" forms in a modern house. That the effect is artistic in the extreme is not surprising, for the subject of this plate is in the dining-room of the home of Mr. Robert Sauber, R.I., R.B.A.

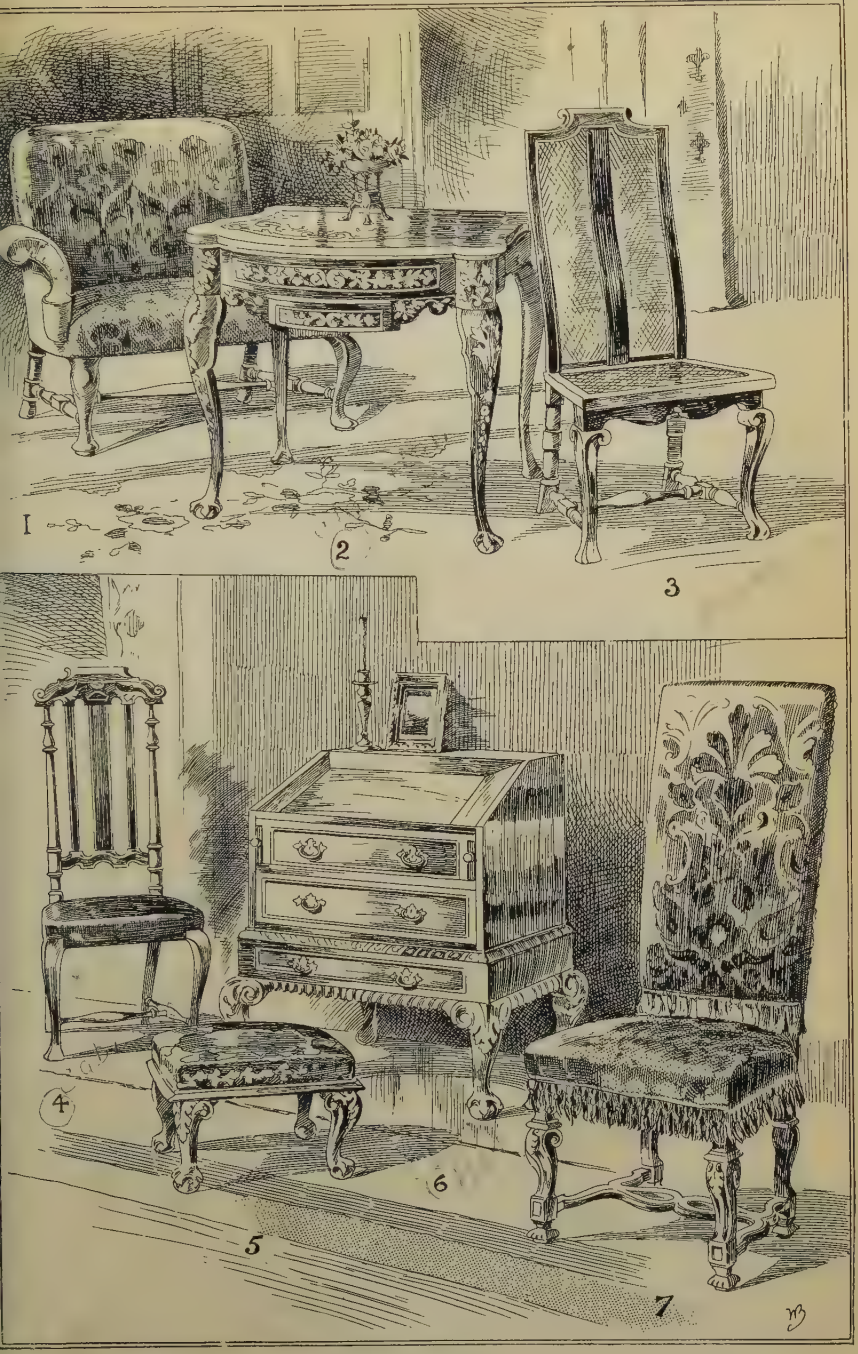
# "QUEEN-ANNE"

As we pass in review the successive changes that have taken place in the applied arts of most countries—and in the applied arts I, of course, include the art of furnishing—it will generally be found that under normal conditions the development of old styles, and the formation of new, have been gradual and evolutional, the characteristics of the older styles growing weaker and those of the new-comers stronger by degrees, until the former have been completely absorbed in, or supplemented by, the latter. This phase of the question is one of the first to present itself to the student of decorative art, and is forcibly illustrated by the work of all ages. There sometimes occur changes which, when they are first encountered, appear to constitute striking exceptions to the general rule; but further investigation will lead to the discovery that they are not really exceptions, but simply represent other offshoots from the parent stem. So it is with style in furniture.

In the progress we have already made in our study, we have arrived, as regards period, at the latter part of the seventeenth century. (The heading of this chapter seems to indicate a later date, and an explanation of that will be afforded as we proceed.)

By analysing and comparing all that was best and most characteristic in the creations of the Elizabethan and Stuart epochs, we have now, I think, gained a complete and just conception of the work of the days which led up to the period we are now about to consider.

Armed then, as he is, with this knowledge, and acting in accordance with accepted principles, the student will prepare

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| Fig. 1. | See 77, 78, 83, 84, 85 |
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to commence his study of the next style on the list with the determination to note, in the first place, how far it resembled the preceding ones with which he is already familiar; and he will endeavour to trace the progress of its growth out of them. He will then be met by the discovery that it did not resemble them in any essential particular, and that, as a matter of fact, it did not grow out of them at all. No, we are now face to face with a period marked by a great and revolutionary change; a period when Stuart forms, instead of furnishing inspiration for fresh ones on their own lines, had to contend against powerful rivalry, notwithstanding the fact that the dynasty under which they had come into existence had not yet succumbed to a stronger one—to one more acceptable to the country at large.

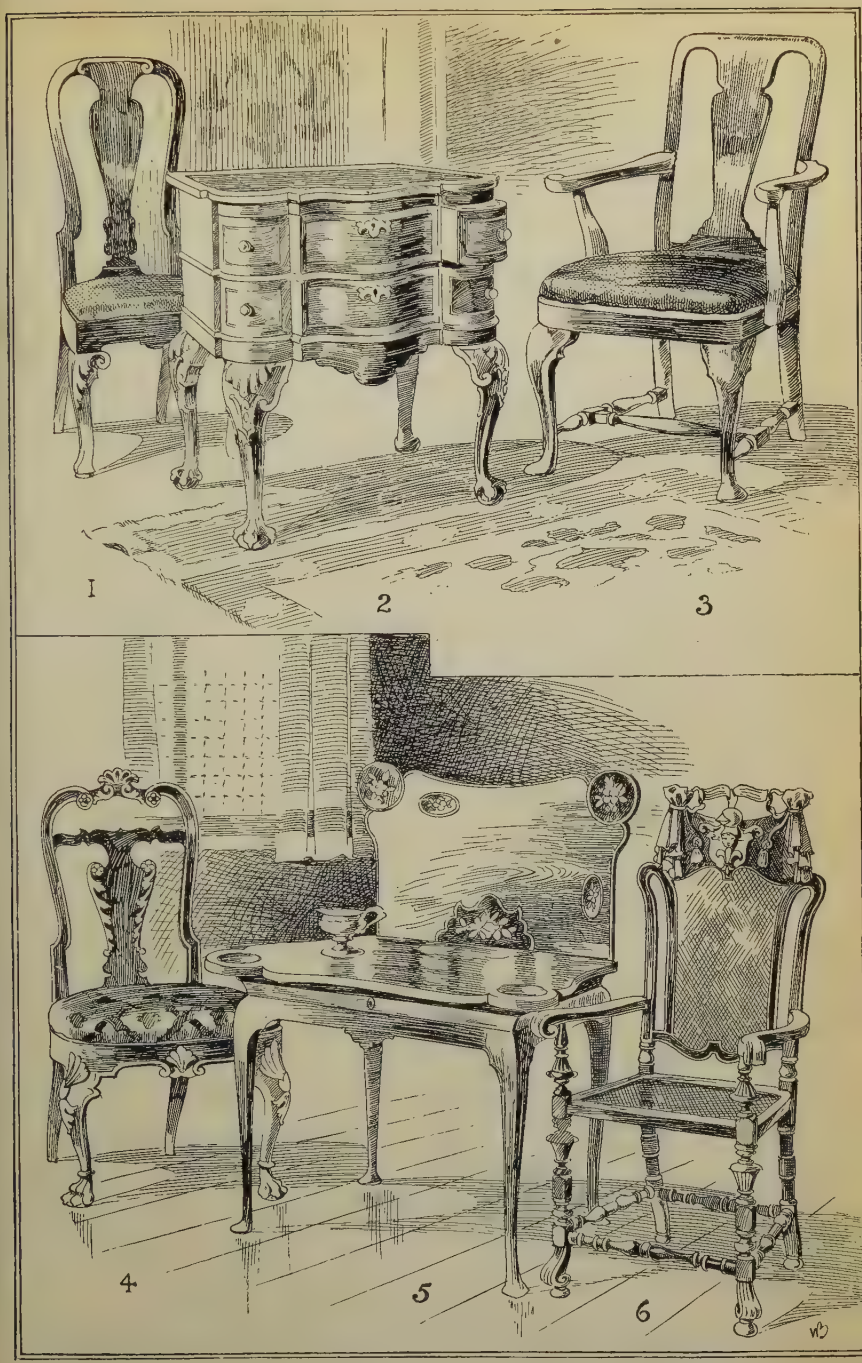
The change that came about was not overwhelmingly sudden, but it was none the less sure. When we peep into the English homes of the last decade of the seventeenth century, we find that pieces of furniture, strange in form—strange at least at that time to this country—and entirely different from the sturdy old types that had "ruled the roost" for considerably over half a century, commence to put in an appearance here and there. Yet all endeavours to trace their origin in the older English styles prove to be absolutely fruitless. It is for us, then, to make ourselves acquainted with the causes underlying this change; and to discover, if we can, the source whence these strange forms emanated. In doing so we shall see again most plainly that there is, after all, more than a little truth in the contention that the history of a people may oftentimes be clearly read in their home surroundings.

If we turn to our histories, should our memories for dates again be unreliable, and read the story of the reign of James the Second, we shall find that, in the year 1688, that king abandoned the throne of England for the quietude of Saint Germains, and that his place at the head of the state was

taken by a certain determined little Dutch Stadtholder, whose claims to the succession were that he was a grandson of Charles the First, a son-in-law of James the Second—and was a man who never knew when he was beaten! Such was the type urgently wanted here at that time.

A brief reference to the bearing of this political change upon the style of our national furnishings will be useful. William, with his Dutch tastes and predilections, came with his consort and took possession; and he made it unmistakably clear at the outset that he intended to be absolute Dictator, notwithstanding the fact that his consort really had the stronger claim to the supreme control. That fact was presented to him, and he simply met it with the reply that he "was not going to be tied to the apron-strings of any woman"; and he had his way. With him, of course, came many of his fellow-countrymen—not to mention fellow-countrywomen—as members of his court; and it was only natural that they should desire that their domestic environment here should remind them, as far as was practicable, of the homes they had temporarily left behind them in their own beloved Holland. On this account, unquestionably, Dutch furniture was imported to this country by the ship-load, and with it came into our midst the inspiration for that style which many people fondly regard as having been a national growth, and proudly describe as "Queen-Anne," in spite of the fact that the sovereign whose name they borrow had as much to do with its inception and subsequent development as the proverbial "man in the moon." The style was founded in the reign of William and Mary, and retained its popularity throughout those of Anne and George the First, and nearly the whole of that of George the Second; nevertheless "Queen-Anne" it was dubbed, and "Queen-Anne" it remains.

Before marking the characteristics of this new style, which was making its way so steadily and surely, we shall be fully

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| Fig. 1. | See 78, 85 | Fig. 4. | See 78, 81 |
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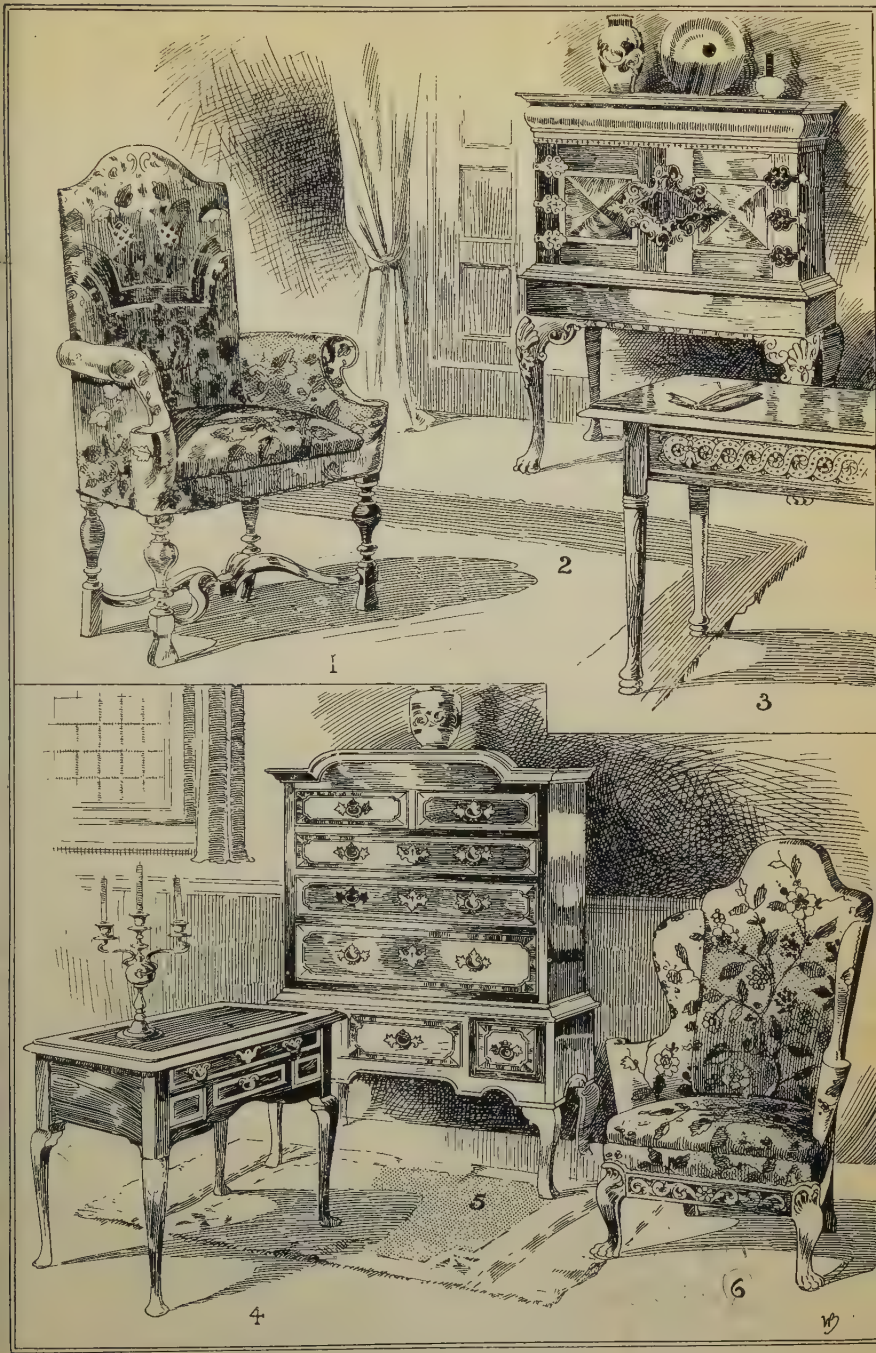
repaid if we review, for a brief space, the changes that were taking place in the attitude of mind—if I may so express it—of the times; and if we notice, as clearly as we can, the type of patron to whom the furnisher had to look for his support. We may thus account in some measure for the steady growth of that spirit of refinement which then characterised our household gods, and reached its zenith at the close of the century the earlier years of which included the reign of Anne.

What, in the first place, were the political conditions of the times in relation to the cultivation of the arts? Were they favourable or otherwise? Let us see.

So far as national affairs were concerned, Queen Anne had cause to be thankful enough. The country was practically at peace, and such disturbances, slight or otherwise, as occurred might with confidence be left for settlement in the hands of the hero of Maestricht, Blenheim, Ramilies, and Malplaquet. "Mrs. Morley" could write her historic letters in peace to "Mrs. Freeman"; "The Family" were looking after the affairs of state—and themselves at the same time; and, at last, the cultivation of the graces of life commenced to supersede the spirit of militarism which had for so long kept them in abeyance. Apostles of those graces, too, were coming to the fore on every hand, and, furthermore, their genius was not only encouraged by public approbation, but won the appreciation, and, of greater importance to them, the financial support, of the State. It is both curious and interesting to recall the *personnel* of many of the public departments of those days. What we find there is most significant; it indicates clearly that men who attained to greatness in art, science, or literature were deemed worthy of their salt, and, as I have said, that something besides martial conquest occupied the thoughts of those who were placed at the head of affairs. A few illustrations of this will help us to form in our own minds a more complete conception of the times which are now our

particular study, and to call up visions of those great ones amidst their proper domestic surroundings.

John Locke had completed his "Essay on the Human Understanding" in the intervals permitted by the performance of his duties as Secretary of Presentations, and Secretary to the Board of Trade; Ray had laid the foundation for the classification of the vegetable and animal kingdoms, by which he won the unstinted admiration of Cuvier himself; Congreve was delighting the playgoing public with his "Double Dealer," "Love for Love," and similar conceits, and had been rewarded by a post in the Hackney Coach Office; Farquhar was competing successfully with him on his own ground by the production of "The Beau's Stratagem," "Love in a Bottle," and like extravagances; while Pope was, at one and the same time, accumulating the wisdom and the gall which gave to the world the "Essay on Man" and the "Dunciad." Matthew Prior had served successively as Gentleman of the Bedchamber to King William, Secretary to the Congress at the Hague, Secretary of State, and Secretary to the Embassy in France, the while he was delighting all people of culture by his writings and poems, and notably by his "History of our own Times." Addison had completed his "Rosamund" and "The Campaign," and was alternating the duties of Commissioner of Appeals and Under-Secretary of State by penning his literary gems for the *Spectator*, *Tatler*, and *Guardian*, and preparing his reproofs for "Little Dickey"; while that gentleman himself—"the most agreeable and most innocent rake that entered the round of dissipation"—was editing his papers, spending a certain number of hours daily in the Stamp Office, suffering expulsion from Parliament for his "Englishman" and "Critic," and bowing the knee for knighthood. Handel was busy fighting duels, writing his "Te Deums" and "Jubilates," and drawing his pension of "four hundred a year"; Walpole was looking after the Exchequer and exports and collecting

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| Fig. 1. | See 77, 83 |
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| ,, 6. | ,, 77, 88 |

his art treasures; Lord Chesterfield—friend of Addison, Pope, Swift, Arbuthnot, Gay, Voltaire, and Montesquieu—was writing his far-famed "Letters," and, at intervals, guiding State affairs in Ireland and Holland. Garrick was sitting at the feet of Dr. Johnson preparatory to trying his chances in the wine trade, and winning his laurels on the stage—curious that our own Toole should have passed from one to the other in the same way; Hogarth was storing up that knowledge of human nature which afterwards, guided by his genius, made him the most powerful pictorial satirist of his or any other age—and striving to win the favour of Sir James Thornhill's daughter; "Peg" Woffington was sending the beaux of the town mad with her "Sir Harry Wildair," and Joshua Reynolds was just entering upon his studies. Looming over all, we see, through the eyes of Boswell, the ponderous figure of Samuel Johnson himself, struggling for eight years over his Dictionary —which was due in three!—and spending his £1575 long before the completion of his task; preparing his Parliamentary reports for the *Gentleman's Magazine;* dodging the bailiffs; and writing "Rasselas" to pay the expenses of his mother's funeral! That remarkable genius, with "his coat, his wig, his scrofula, his St. Vitus's dance, his rolling walk, his blinking eye, the outward signs which too clearly marked the approbation of his dinner; his insatiable appetite for fish sauce and veal pie with plums; his inextinguishable thirst for tea; his trick of touching the posts as he walked; his mysterious practice of treasuring up scraps of orange-peel; his morning slumbers, his midnight disputations, his contortions, his mutterings, his gruntings, his puffings; his vigorous, acute, and ready eloquence; his sarcastic wit, his vehemence, his insolence, his fits of tempestuous rage, his queer inmates—old Mr. Levett and blind Mrs. Williams, the cat Hodge, and the negro Frank."

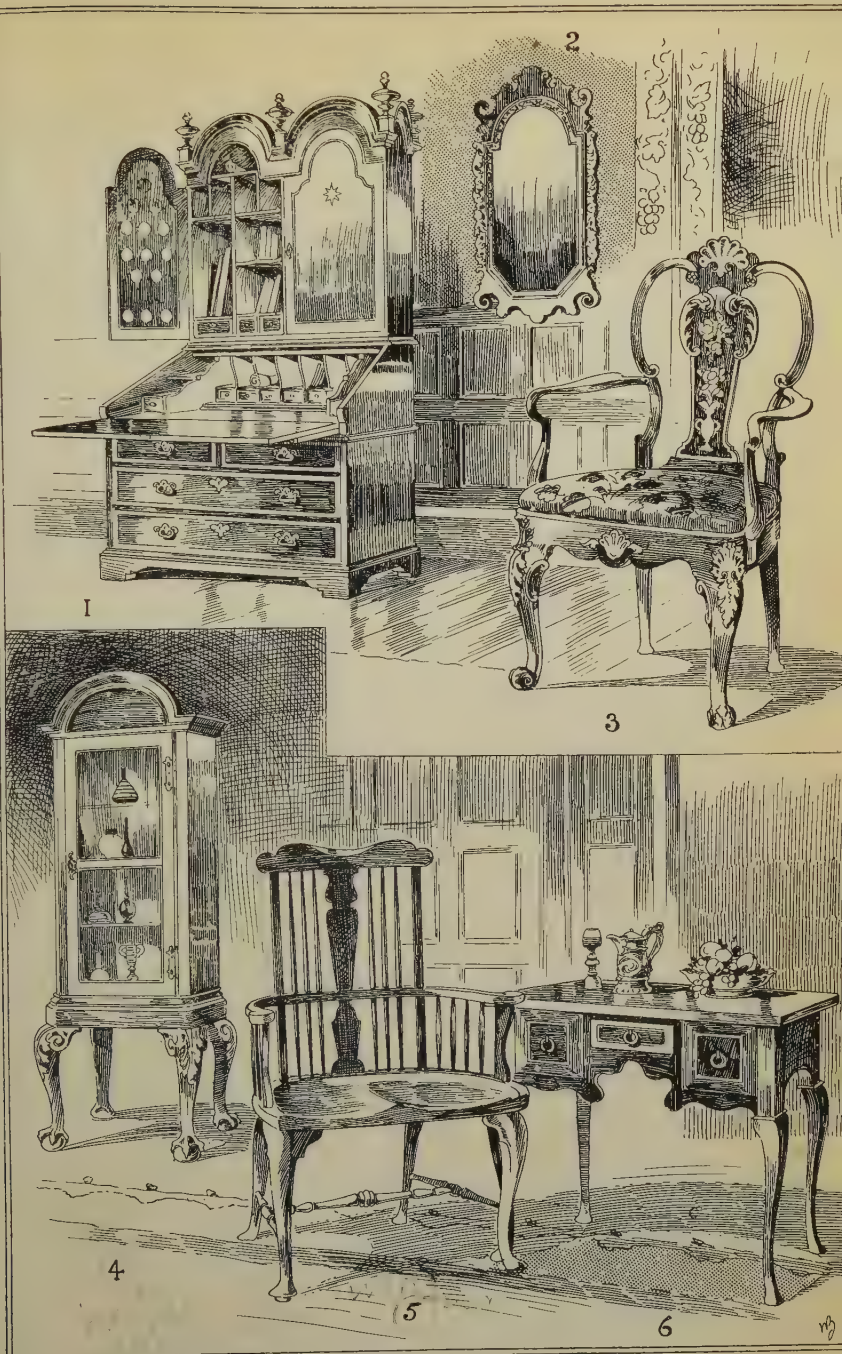
It is with such figures as these, then, that we may, if we be so disposed, people our interiors in imagination when we

have fitted them up from the material provided in these pages; and their presence in our memories cannot but enhance the interest of our study of their silent companions. Is it surprising that, in the midst of so notable a revival of culture and refinement in almost every walk of life, domestic furnishings should throw off much of the clumsiness that had characterised them for so long, and take to themselves forms in greater harmony with the higher tastes of the time?

As I have already remarked, however, for indications of the very first appearance of the "Queen-Anne," we must look back to a period considerably prior to that which saw the termination of the sway of the House of Stuart, if we are to see how, and with what measure of success, the English cabinet maker and chair maker adjusted himself to the new conditions which were brought into play, and prepared to answer the demand for all things Dutch.

I have said that the change was revolutionary, and so, indeed, it was; a fact that will be readily appreciated if we study the matter carefully from all points of view. The reader must remember that, up to the time of this artistic invasion, rectangular forms, and the straight line generally, had largely predominated in the construction of English furniture; foliations, scrolls, or curves, of any sort or kind whatsoever, were seldom indulged in at all, except by the carver or marquetry cutter, or save in the case of chair arms or backs. Table and chair legs had always remained either "square" or turned, but generally straight; "carcase work" had been entirely innocent of shaping, save in very exceptional instances; the pediment was practically unknown to the cabinet maker in his craft; and, indeed, everything in the least approaching the curvilinear in construction was studiously avoided.

But what a change came over the scene with the advent of William and Mary! Stern and unrelenting severity of form was forced to give way before graceful shaping and

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| Fig. 1. | See 86, 88 |
| Fig. 4. | See 78, 88 |
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sinuous curves. The chair, which in the old days any number of cushions could hardly render comfortable, so rigid and severe was it, began to be shaped so that, in some measure, it would accord with the lines of the body, and not only became really graceful but was also transformed into a delightfully comfortable asylum for the tired frame which needed repose. And every other article for the furnishing and adornment of the home was conceived and carried out with a close regard for the same considerations. Proportions and "quantities" were lightened in every way, and a spirit of elegance came upon the scene, which was entirely novel to our insular and old, familiar traditions.

We shall presently see in what forms this spirit found expression in British workmanship; but, before doing so, it will be well for us first to glance at one or two really Dutch models of the description from which our inspiration came. It may be taken that the "Queen-Anne" types which we shall consider are such as were in more or less general use here from the commencement of the eighteenth century until about 1760; indeed, until the influence of Chippendale and his contemporary workers really and seriously commenced to make itself felt. The examples chosen for illustration were all produced during that period. Fig. 4, Plate VII., is a Dutch cupboard; Figs. 2 and 7 tables of the same character and period; and Figs. 1, 3, 5, and 6 are typical chairs. With these before us, our study of their English descendants will be rendered all the more interesting.

It will serve our purpose very well to master first the line of the "Queen-Anne" chair, sofa, and seat generally, before proceeding to the consideration of other articles; and these alone call for somewhat lengthy comment. Prior to going into greater detail we will deal with general constructional form; and though the chair to which I shall now invite attention is, to a great extent, a hybrid production, and really cannot be described as pure "Queen-Anne," it reveals

strongly the growing influence of the "Dutch," and so may be accepted as a good starting-point for our study of individual examples of the style.

One of the first features that it is desirable to regard carefully, before deciding the question whether any chair is to be classed under this particular heading, is the leg; for by the introduction of the "Queen-Anne"—I must employ that title, as it has for so long met with general acceptance—the form of that structural detail was entirely changed from that which it had previously taken. Formerly, as I have pointed out, the chair-seat was, as a rule, supported by perfectly upright members, either turned, "square," or otherwise rectangular in plan—a rule, the following of which helped to give a distinctive character to the "Jacobean" type; but at the period at which we have now arrived, that rule obtained no longer. The interpreters of the new style would have none of it, but substituted a shaped member which was then, as now, designated the "cabriole." Of these there are many slight variations in form, but all resemble one another very closely in the essential particular, the differences subsisting simply in the degree of subtlety on the one hand, or boldness on the other, of the shaping. That presented in Fig. 4, Plate I., may be regarded as a standard, and thoroughly characteristic, model. To trace the "cabriole" back to its earliest origin, which, in the opinion of some, is to be found in the animal leg and claw of the "Classic," is a lengthy task which need not be undertaken here; neither is it necessary for us to go deeply into the philological derivations of the name; but I may point out that, just as we appropriated the form from the "Flemish" or "Dutch," so the originators of those groups of styles, in their turn, were indebted for it to the French. By way of illustrating this point, I have introduced Fig. 7, Plate I., a "Louis-Quatorze" model, in the legs of which may be noted one of the earlier developments of the "cabriole," which certainly grew in grace

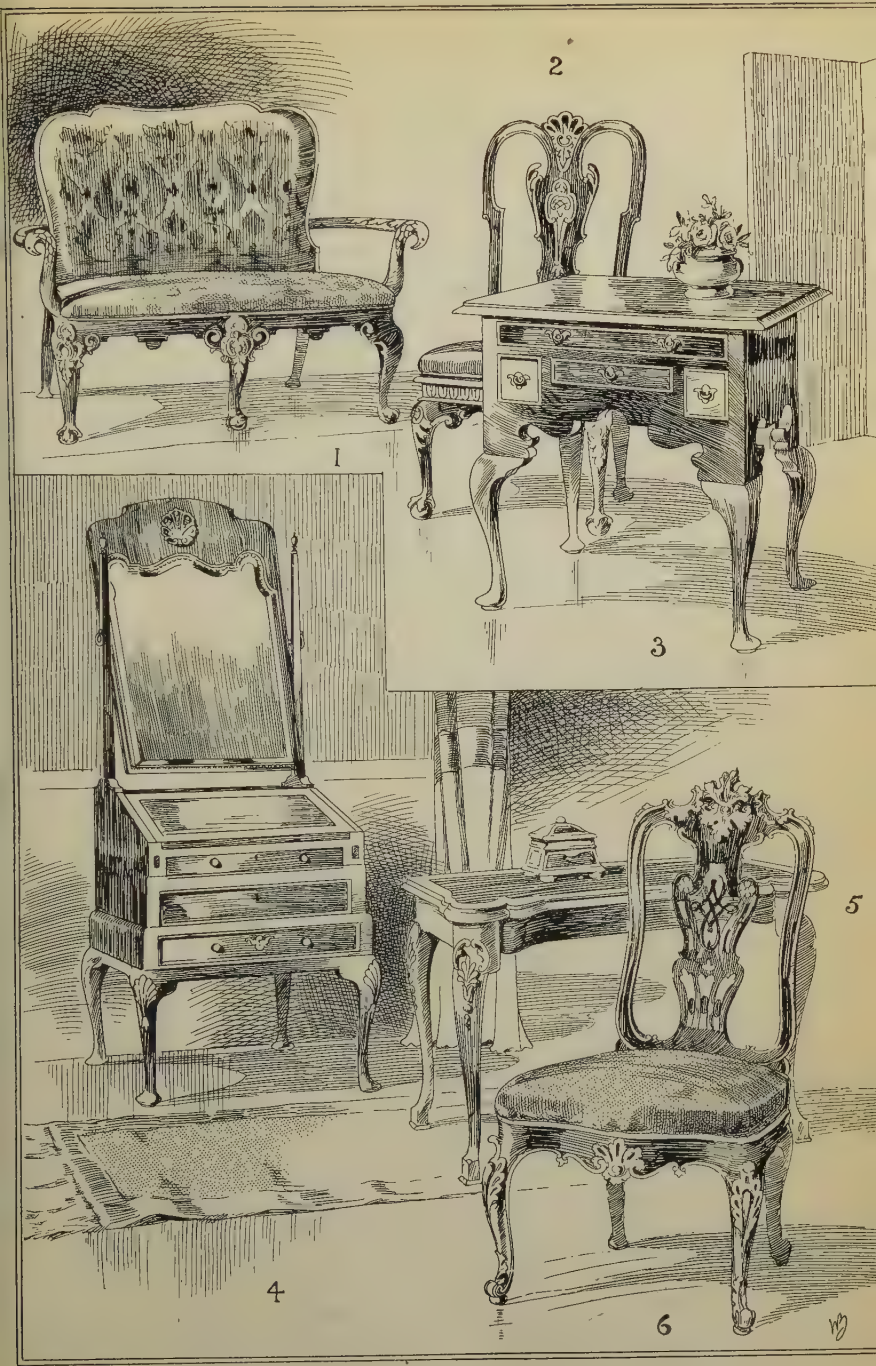


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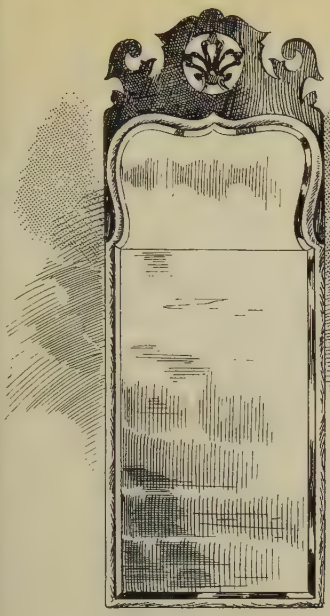
Fig. 1. See *Page* 78, 84

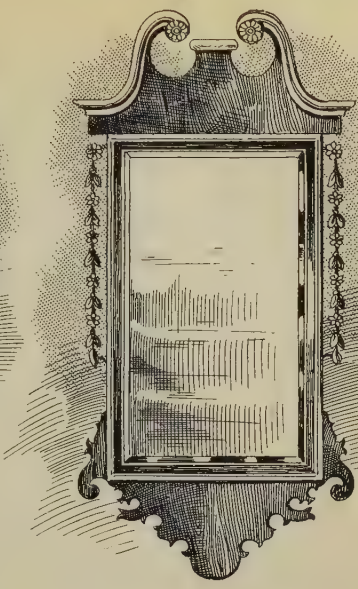
Fig. 4. See *Page* 86

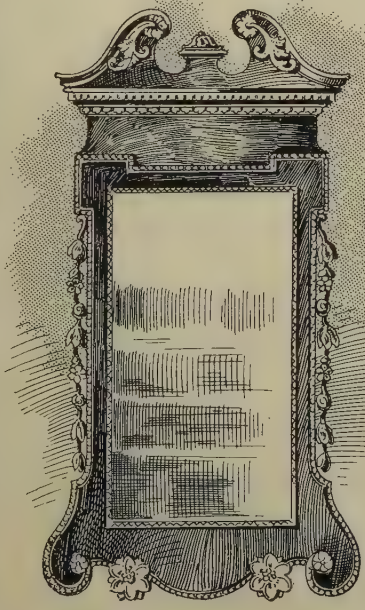
as years rolled on. But to return to Fig. 4. The back is more than a little reminiscent of the "Jacobean" "slat back" (of which an example is shown on Plate IV. "Elizabethan"), though the slender turning which is introduced and the framing-in of the "slats," again reveal the foreign influence. In the first place, then, the "cabriole" leg must be noted as a thoroughly distinctive feature, to be encountered throughout the style; and it now behoves us to study the most typical of the variations of that form which we are likely to find in the course of our investigations.

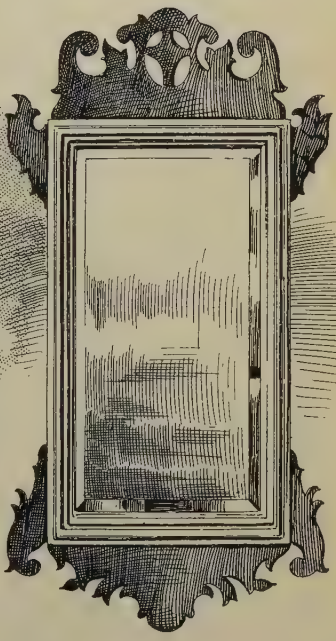
In Fig. 1, Plate I., we see the shorter "cabriole" so adapted to answer the requirements of the couch, sofa, or any low seat. Here the proportions are altered, and the whole member becomes heavier in appearance, but even thus it is not without a certain amount of grace of line. This rendering of it is not only to be found in chairs and seats, but is often introduced into cabinet work in cases where the "carcase" is raised from the ground, but not to the same height as is the average chair seat (see Fig. 6, Plate I., and Fig. 5, Plate III.). In tables, again, where the length of the leg is always greater than that of the chair, the "cabriole" is elongated, as in Fig. 2, Plate I.; Fig. 5, Plate II.; Fig. 4, Plate III.; and Fig. 6, Plate IV. In these cases the proportions of the support are generally much lighter, and the curves far more subtle and often more graceful. If a chair which is "Queen-Anne" in character be found with straight legs, as in Fig. 6, Plate II., and Fig. 1, Plate III., we may be certain either that it is a very early example, or that it is more Flemish than English in origin. Where the straight-turned legs appear they are usually accompanied by under-framing, as in the two examples specified; and the same feature also occurs, but not invariably, in connection with the "cabriole" leg (see Figs. 1, 3, 4, Plate I.; Fig. 3, Plate II.; and Fig. 5, Plate IV.), consisting of slender, simple turning, interrupted by "squares" where the joints occur.

The "cabriole," as employed in the "Queen-Anne," is often, and more frequently in the less expensive models, perfectly free from enrichment of any kind, the shaping alone being relied on for effect (see Figs. 1 and 4, Plate I.; Fig. 3, Plate II., and other examples) but the temptation to "touch it up a bit" here and there was altogether too strong to be resisted by the carver, who soon commenced to exercise his chisel upon it. He proceeded carefully at first, and contented himself by making the curve at the top of the leg terminate in a simple scroll, and imparting to the toe somewhat of the semblance of an animal's paw. But this did not satisfy him. The top was further enriched by an indication of the Dutch "shell," and the members of the paw became more distinct, as in Fig. 6, Plate III. Sometimes the "shell" itself, in its entirety, was carved boldly on the "knee," as in Fig. 4, Plate V. The thin end of the wedge—or I should rather say "of the chisel"—having thus been duly inserted, further elaboration naturally followed, till the "knees" became as ornate as in Fig. 6, Plate I.; Figs. 1, 2, and 4, Plate II.; Fig. 2, Plate III.; Figs. 3 and 4, Plate IV.; and Figs. 1, 2, and 6, Plate V. The claws, also, of the paw, instead of being drawn in and resting on the floor, were made to grip a ball or small sphere of wood, as in Figs. 2, 5, and 6, Plate I.; Fig. 2, Plate II.; Fig. 4, Plate IV.; and Figs. 1 and 2, Plate V. Occasionally the shape of the paw was omitted altogether, the leg terminating at the toe in a scroll more or less enriched, as in Fig. 3, Plate IV.; and in Fig. 6, Plate V., the scroll usually being raised very slightly from the floor by a small block or "cushion" of wood, as shown. There is one example among those presented which almost suggests to one's mind the idea that a late, straight-legged "Jacobean" type, jealous of the capers cut—"cabriole" is French for "caper"—by its newly-imported rivals, determined to put its own "best leg foremost" in order to see what it could achieve in the same direction. The attempt was praiseworthy, but









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the results were slight, as Fig. 3, Plate III., will testify. Still, the effect was by no means ungraceful; and this leg, in its entirety, should be most carefully noted, as it is very often found at this period. It certainly does convey some suggestion of the "cabriole," but it is far less costly to produce, and so was greatly used in the cheaper class of furniture of the day. The carved enrichment on the table in question is, I need hardly say, unqualified and most typical "Jacobean." Later developments of the "cabriole," as it appeared when it was taken in hand by Thomas Chippendale, will be dealt with in the chapter devoted to the designs of that old master; but, in the meantime, the reader may compare the legs specified below:—

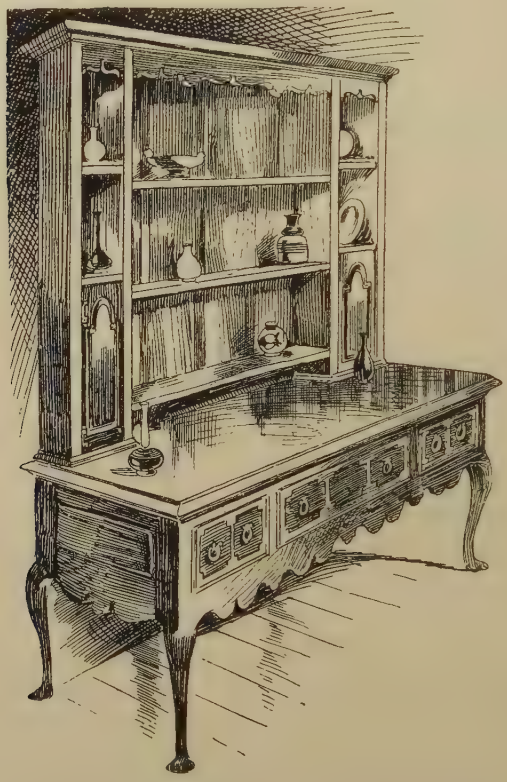
| *"Queen-Anne."* | *"Chippendale."* |
|---|---|
| Fig. 3, Plate I. | Lower chair, Plate I. |
| „ 3, „ II. | Upper „ „ VI. |
| „ 3, „ IV. | „ „ „ I. |
| | „ „ „ III. |
| | Lower „ „ „ |

and a number of others.

So general did the employment of the "cabriole" form become that it even found its way into the kitchen dresser, as may be seen by reference to illustration on following page. I must point out, however, in reference to such old dressers as these, that, in most cases, the apartments in which they found a place were really the living rooms of the home, and were not for the use of servants only. Then, the housewife was proud to devote personal care to the cleanliness and protection of her plates and dishes, and was naturally desirous that an asylum as tasteful as possible should be provided for their reception.

The foregoing remarks exhaust, I think, the subject of "Queen-Anne" legs, and we must now see what there is to be noted in the chair seats and backs. The seats, as will be observed, assume a variety of forms, but are seldom, if ever,

rectangular, being almost invariably narrower at the back than at the front. Sometimes the line of the side-framing is straight, though springing at an angle from the back; but



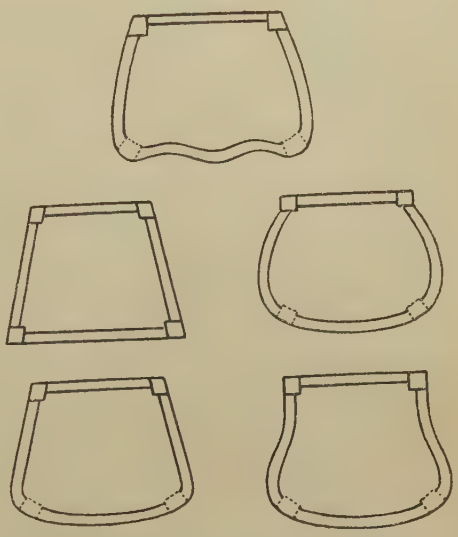
"Queen-Anne" Dresser, of a Type Common in Lancashire, Yorkshire, and Wales

(*See page 79 for reference*)

frequently the form of the seat is completely curvilinear. This can be better explained by the assistance of illustrations, and in the outline plans that appear on the opposite page,

we see the principal shapes of the "Queen-Anne" chair seat at a glance.

We may now proceed to the consideration of the backs which generally accompany them. The forms of back most favoured were those of the type represented by Figs. 1 and 3, Plate II.; and those illustrated on the plate of Dutch examples. In these a "baluster," or broad "splat," of pleasing outline, is framed-in by gracefully shaped top and sides, the lines of which generally follow right round in one unbroken and more or less sinuous "sweep." Variations of this will be found in Fig. 4, Plate II., Fig. 3, Plate IV., and Figs. 2 and 6, Plate V.; but these are somewhat exceptional. The two first-named are probably actually Dutch, while Fig. 6, Plate V., is a curious mixture of "Dutch" and "French," although it would almost come under our description "Queen-Anne," so all-embracing is that title.



PLANS OF TYPICAL "QUEEN-ANNE" CHAIR SEATS

(*See page* 80 *for reference*)

Figure 6, Plate II., was doubtless specially designed and made for some ceremonial purpose, and cannot be regarded as a type, though it is interesting nevertheless. The *fleur-de-lis* and knotted cord in the heraldic device seem to indicate

that this chair was designed for some family of French extraction; but the toes of the front legs are decidedly "Spanish," as rendered in Flanders.

It was at this period that the "easy chair" commenced to come into vogue, and greater provision was made for the support and comfort of the head and shoulders of the occupant. Backs were constructed higher and of more generous proportion; and, among other innovations, the form which we now know as the "Windsor" put in an appearance. In this the centre baluster was not at first abandoned; it was supported on each side by simple turned rods or members, the whole being surmounted by a shaped piece, after the manner shown in Fig. 5, Plate IV. Few more serviceable, sensible, or, for the matter of that, comfortable, wooden chair forms have ever been devised; and it is not at all surprising that this type, with its numerous variations, should have remained popular even down to the present time.

With the taste for luxury and refinement steadily growing on every hand, a degree of ease and comfort was demanded greater than that which the woodworker alone could provide; and it was apparent that something further must be done. It is most curious, almost inexplicable indeed, that that something was not done long before. For many a long year, in Italy, Spain, France, Germany, and the Netherlands, the chair maker had found an invaluable coadjutor in the upholsterer, who had done wonders to render his productions kindly and inviting to the body; but, unless seats were imported from abroad, the physical frames of our countrymen and countrywomen had been compelled to extract what comfort they could, by the aid of loose cushions, from the hardest of oak, uncomfortable enough in itself, but rendered far worse by the vigorous ministrations of the carver, with his crude embellishments.

Eventually a change came about; and the English chair maker argued to himself that if "the foreigner" could

upholster so could he, and he set to work to master the craft. The success with which he met is shown by such models as Fig. 1, Plate I., and Fig. 6, Plate III. In the last we have one of the earliest ancestors of our now beloved "Grandfather," or "Wing," chair, in which many a weary head has found comfort, repose, and immunity from draughts. The backs of these, it will be noticed, are of a sensible height, and fully upholstered; there is no suggestion of the more modern "pin stuffing" about them. The arms, with their comfortable "rolls," open out invitingly, tempting one to yield to their embrace. But there are embraces which have disastrous results, particularly where ladies' dresses are concerned, so most of the arms in question were constructed with that fact in view, and were set-back from the front of the seat in such a way as to permit of the satisfactory disposition of the "fulness" of the Queen-Anne and early Georgeian skirt. This will be apparent in Fig. 1, Plate I.; and more especially so in Fig. 6, Plate III. In Fig. 1, Plate III., which is not a very characteristic type, the same consideration is not quite so noticeable, though there are signs of it.

ARM-CHAIR

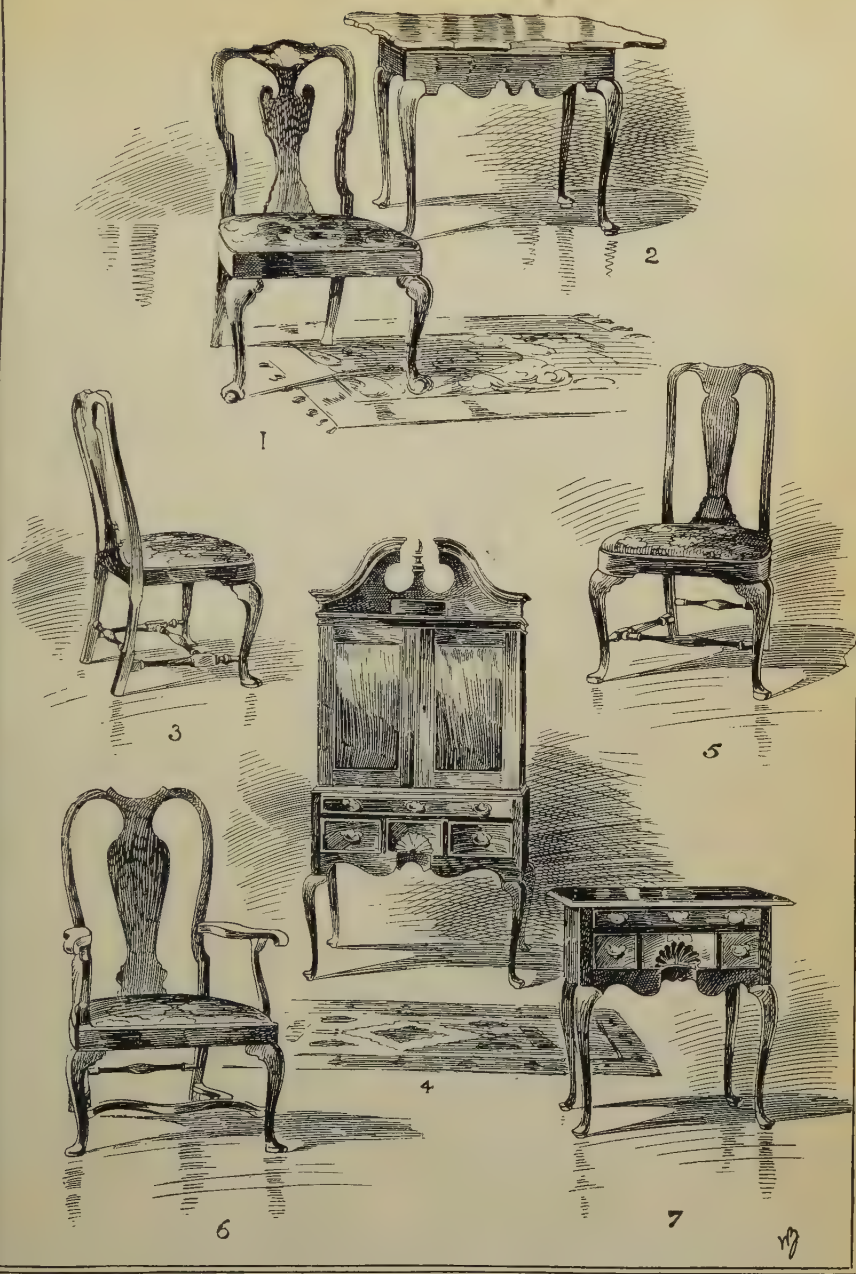
(Said to have belonged to Josiah Wedgwood)

The materials employed by the upholsterer for covering included all those produced by the loom and any other which could possibly be pressed into service for such a purpose, in addition, of course, to leather; while the deft needle of the embroideress was frequently set going for the beautification of such pieces as those illustrated. This was the case, indeed, with Fig. 1, Plate I. This fine old double seat is the property of Mrs. J. Seymour Lucas—whose brush work has been so constant a delight to all of us—and, in its present condition, has some interesting associations. When it was first secured by its gifted possessor, the covering of old English needlework was in a condition that might have been deemed altogether hopeless; but H.R.H. Princess Louise, upon examining it, saw the possibility of its restoration, and displayed her keen interest in all that appertains to the art of the needle by undertaking to have the work carried through successfully. The result is a triumph of stitchery, and is naturally treasured by Mrs. Lucas as a practical and tangible proof of the great and cultured encouragement accorded by Her Royal Highness to the cultivation of the applied arts in this country.

Another seat of a similar character, but of an earlier type, and one in which upholstery does not play so prominent a part, is shown in Fig. 1, Plate V. Here, the "stuffing" has not yet reached the arms, which are of that curious form suggestive of a bird's neck and head, sometimes encountered in chairs of this period, but which can scarcely be described as graceful.

At this time, too, as an alternative to upholstery, cane, being less expensive, came largely into use in the seats and backs of chairs, as represented in Fig. 3, Plate I., in which we have yet another variation of the "Queen-Anne" back.

Finally, as regards chairs, the attention of the reader must be specially directed to the "Queen-Anne" chair-back as it appears when regarded from the side. When studied from

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| | Page |
|---|---|
| Fig. 1. | See 75 |
| ,, 2. | ,, 75 |
| ,, 3. | ,, 75 |
| Fig. 4. | See 75, 81 |
| ,, 5. | ,, 75 |
| ,, 6. | ,, 75 |

that point of view, it will be seen that the back proper, or, in any case, the centre baluster, is shaped to conform in some measure with the lines of the body, supporting the shoulders, and curving forward towards the seat so as to meet the lower part of the trunk. This innovation, which, I need hardly say, was a great advance so far as comfort was concerned, may be noted in Fig. 3, Plate I., and Figs. 1 and 3, Plate II.; as also in the upholstering of Fig. 1, Plate I., and of Fig. 6, Plate III.

Of the tables illustrated nothing much need be said. The enrichment of that shown in Fig. 2, Plate I., is an example of the light Dutch marquetry which became rather popular here at the time of William and Mary's reign; the details usually consisted of naturalesque leaves, blossoms, and birds, in sycamore, pear, maple, mahogany, holly, and other veneers. Fig. 5, Plate II., is, of course, a card-table, with special places provided for "light refreshment" and the coin of the realm; it was most probably made in early Georgeian days. Fig. 3, Plate III., has been discussed; while Fig. 5, Plate V., speaks for itself. Fig. 2, Plate II., is a writing-table, the shaping of the front of which is, of course, based on the "French"; Fig. 4, Plate III., Fig. 6, Plate IV., and Fig. 3, Plate V., are other types of the same article, unmistakably from the "Dutch"; while in Fig. 6, Plate I., we find a considerable step is made towards the development of the bureau from the form in which it appears in Fig. 4, Plate I., in the chapter on "Elizabethan."

Until this time, the majority of the community who were engaged in literary pursuits, either for pleasure or profit, had received but meagre consideration at the hands of the cabinet maker in the direction of providing them with a safe and handy asylum for their stationery, papers, and other similar accessories; but now their wants began to receive greater attention, and such pieces of furniture as that under review came into being. The welcome accorded to them must have

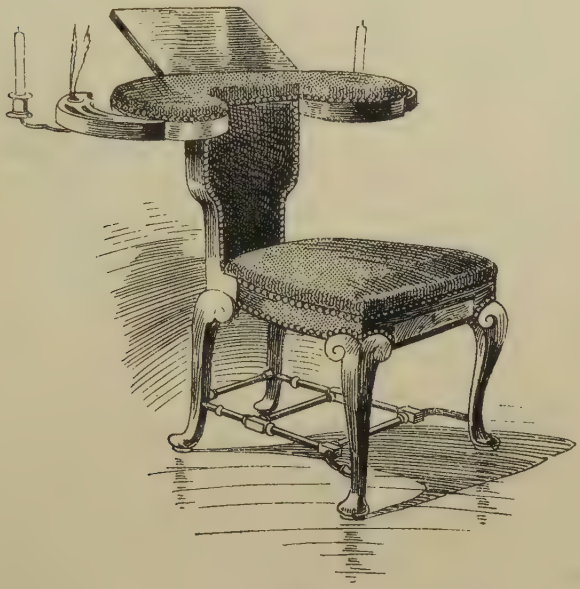
been a hearty one indeed. Presently a further step was taken, and the requirements of both literature and the toilet, a curious combination, were considered conjointly, and this led to the production of models of the type portrayed in Fig. 4, Plate V. Is it possible that this introduction of the large toilet mirror in connection with the writing-table was a direct hint to the literary men of the day that the physical results of the "poet's frenzy," or the ill-treatment of the hair consequent upon the struggle to shape a pleasing phrase, or discover an apt quotation, called for rectification before departure from the scene of operations? At all events, it is more than possible that in such a glass as this Addison may have adjusted his peruke after the penning of one of Will Honeycomb's escapades, or Pope after putting the finishing touches to the "Odyssey."

The advantages associated with even these dainty little bureaux, small as they were, were so great and obvious, that there was a demand for their enlargement in order that even greater comfort and accommodation should be provided for the literary worker. Thus, in the course of time, the "bureau-bookcase" was evolved, and took, as one of its forms, that which is represented in Fig. 1, Plate IV.; an example at which the great John Wesley himself did much of his writing when at home from his memorable journeyings.

By such stages the "bureau-bookcase," "escritoire," "secrétaire," or "secretary," grew from the simple desk supported by four turned legs, as we saw it in a preceding chapter, into an article of its present importance, and became one of the most indispensable pieces of furniture in every well-appointed eighteenth-century English household. Here we may leave it, in order to resume its consideration later.

As additional proof that, at this time, the furnisher deemed it desirable to cater for the requirements of the literary man, an illustration is given here of a reading and writing chair in

which, if report speak truly, John Gay—keen admirer of Pope, and originator of the English ballad-opera—was wont to study and write at his ease. It is more than probable that the idea for this was borrowed from the French "conversation chair,"



"QUEEN-ANNE" CHAIR

(Said to have been made for the Poet Gay)

or "gossip chair," which was not uncommon in France at the time.

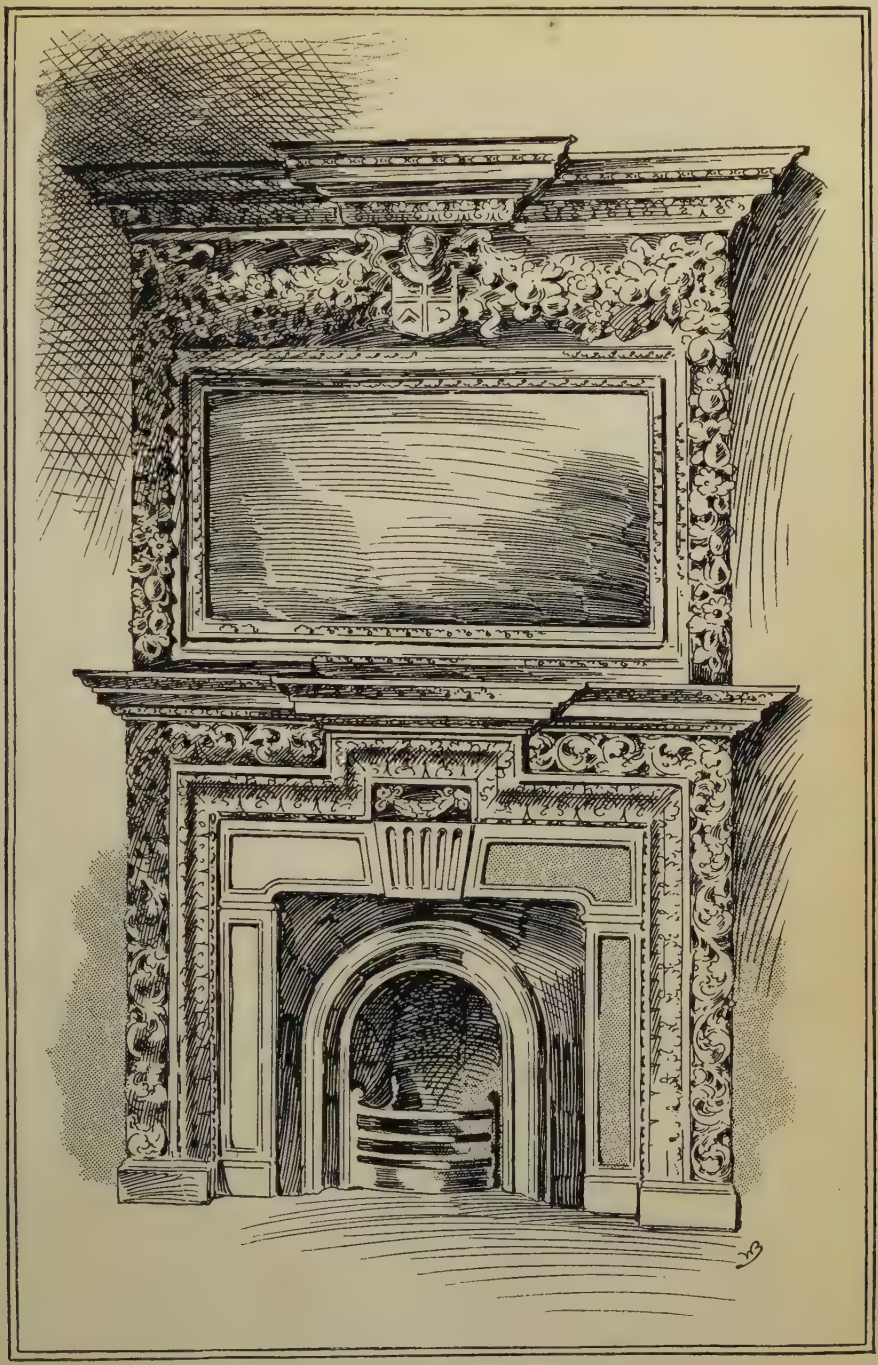
With the introduction of the bureau-bookcase, other cabinet work of a more pretentious description commenced to find its way into the home—particularly that designed for the storage of household linen, and for the reception and protection from dust of articles of wearing apparel. It was

not time yet for the wardrobe, as we know it nowadays, to take its place in the bedroom; but chests of drawers began to extend their sphere of influence by assuming greater dimensions; and the linen press arrived to stay. The comparative merits of the shelf or drawer, and the "hanging cupboard," for the safe keeping of garments, may be gone into in connection with another matter; and I need simply say here that for that purpose the belles and beaux of the first half of the eighteenth century had to content themselves with such receptacles as the one illustrated in Fig. 5, Plate III. Whatever these lacked in the way of convenience, they certainly atoned for by elegance of line. From types such as these came the "High Boy" (from the French "*Haut Bois*"), or "Tall Boy," as it is more generally styled, which has yet to be brought under review, and will receive attention when we arrive at the work of Chippendale.

Furthermore, these were the early days of the cabinet as a distinct article of furniture for the display and protection of valuable knick-knacks and *objets d'art et vertu* generally, some "small beginnings" of which we find in Fig. 2, Plate III., and in Fig. 4, Plate IV. The former may have been used in the drawing-room for the purpose already specified, or in the dining-room as a successor to the old "bread-and-cheese cupboard"—the sideboard had not been invented at the time of which I am writing.

The woods employed in the manufacture of the earlier "Queen-Anne" furniture in this country were chiefly oak, walnut, chestnut, beech, lime, and others of the softer species; but after 1742, when mahogany was first used here in the making of furniture, that wood was freely requisitioned. We sometimes find, also, inlay of satinwood and "canary," as in Fig. 5, Plate III., and Fig. 1, Plate IV.

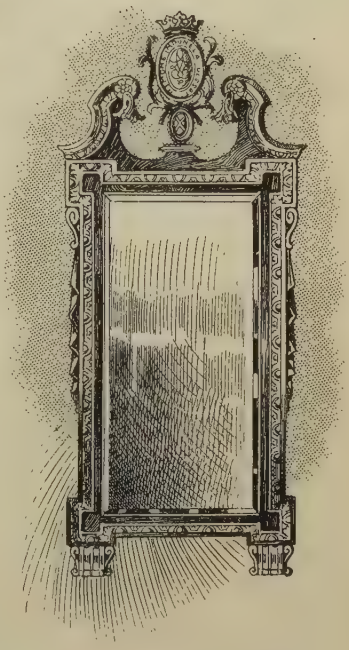
There still remains one article of no inconsiderable importance of which I have not yet spoken, and that is the mirror as an independent object, and distinct from its use as



MANTELPIECE OF THE "QUEEN-ANNE" PERIOD

(With heavy carving of leaves, fruit, and flowers, after the style favoured by Grinling Gibbons)

an integral part of another piece of furniture. Wall mirrors were very common in the Queen-Anne and early Georgeian days; but those belonging to that period, numerous as they were, present no difficulty in regard to identification, as all bear a very close resemblance to one another, and were much on the lines indicated by Fig. 2, Plate IV., on Plate VI., and by other illustrations in this chapter. The frame usually consisted of flat wood, cut to various shapes —some of them most fantastic — on which were "planted" enriched mouldings (the old "egg-and-tongue" rendered yeoman's service in this direction), somewhat heavy festoons of fruit, leaves, and flowers, and other detail of a character more or less decorative, and which, by-the-bye, was usually gilt. It was not uncommon for the glass to be surmounted by a carved-and-gilt semblance of some strange and wonderful bird, of a species certainly not known to our old friend John Ray, and the classification of which would, I am sure, have defied the powers of even Cuvier himself.

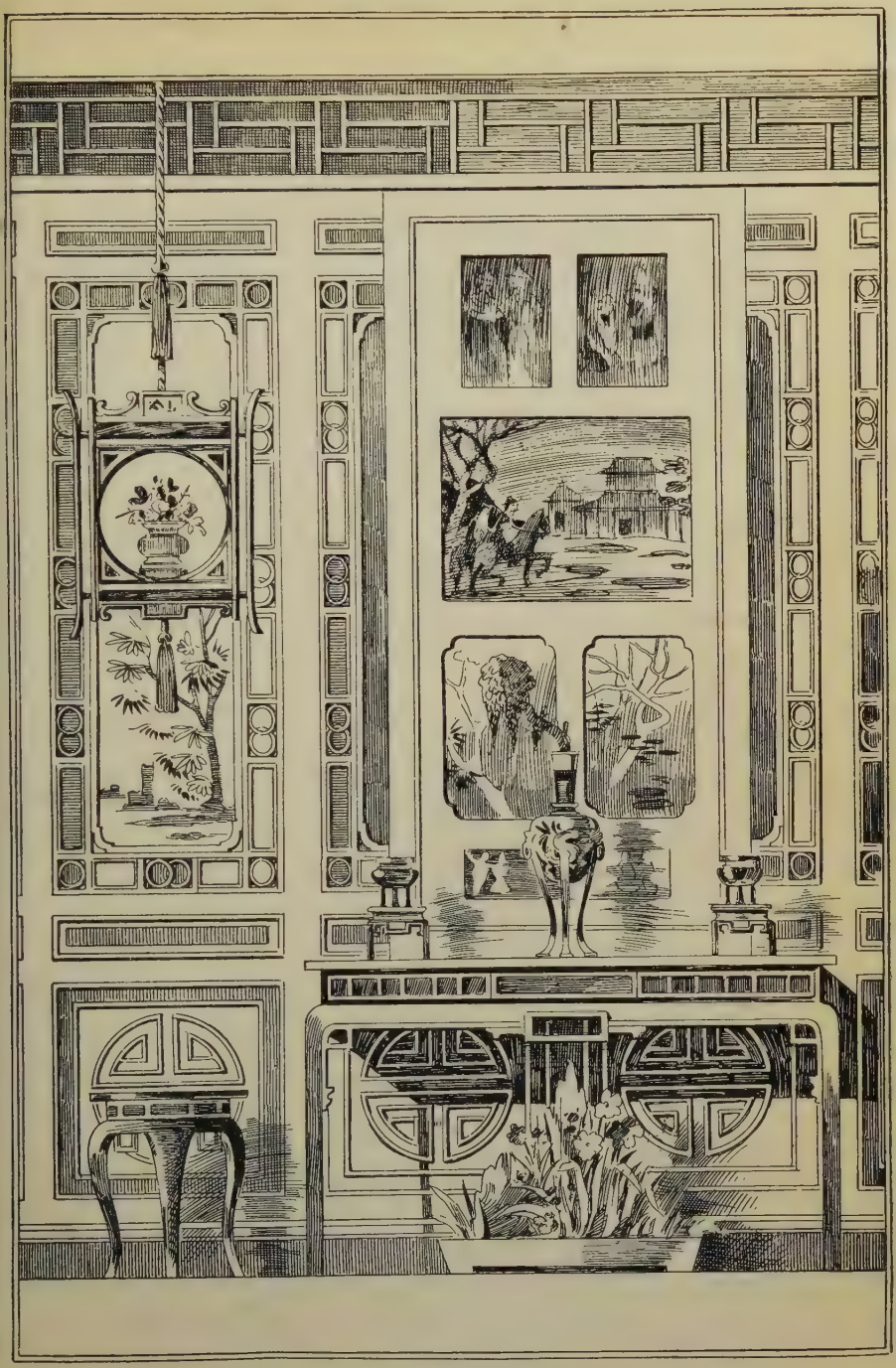


GEORGEIAN WALL MIRROR

(*See above for reference*)

But I must not linger longer over the work of this period — call it "Queen-Anne," "Anglo-Dutch," "Early-Georgeian," or what you will. Great as would be the pleasure in dwelling further upon the memories of those days, so full

of fascination, enough has been written and shown to indicate fully the fact that, with the dawn of the eighteenth-century, a new spirit—a spirit of grace and refinement—*was* infused into the domestic surroundings of our forefathers. Having once recognised its presence—and who could fail to do so in the face of testimony so convincing?—it remains for us to follow it through many successive stages of development; to note how it swept away old and worn-out traditions, and substituted new ones in their place, whose introduction was destined to work wonders.



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# SIR WILLIAM CHAMBERS

In the present chapter we have to deal, not with the formation or development of a distinct style, but with a germ, if I may so describe it, from which grew a certain and not unimportant phase of a style which will presently occupy our most serious attention. My comments for the moment will, therefore, be brief and to the point.

In the year 1744, a youth of eighteen, William Chambers by name, was registered as supercargo to the Swedish East India Company, and, during the course of his wanderings, travelled much in China. Being artistically disposed, he made special note of the architecture, both interior and exterior, which he saw in that country. Later, he settled in England, adopted architecture as his profession, became F.R.S. and F.R.A.S., Treasurer of the Royal Academy, and Knight of the Polar Star of Sweden, and was responsible for the design of a number of important buildings, notable amongst which stands Somerset House.

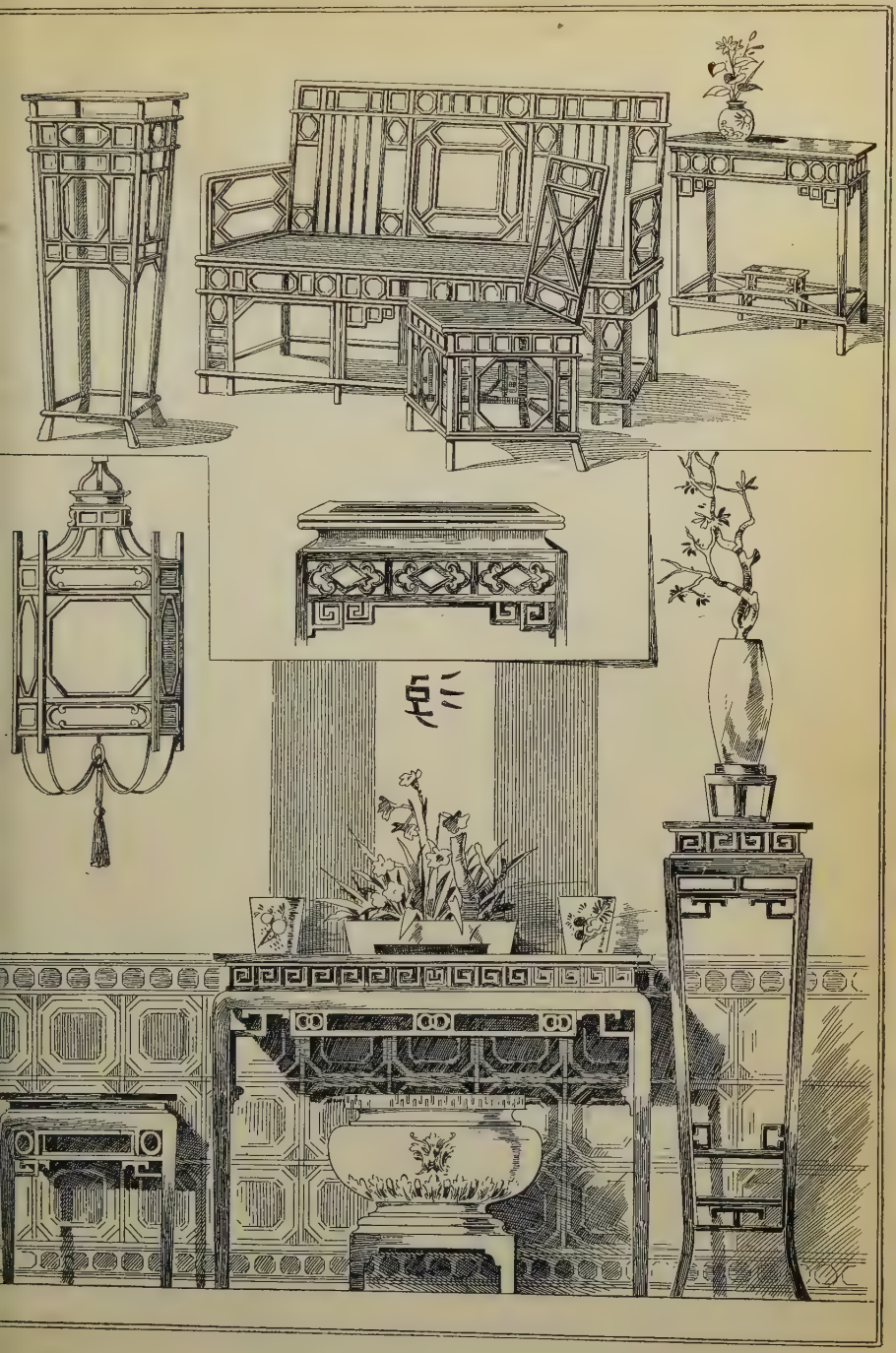
With the career of Sir William Chambers we need not concern ourselves; we will only note his predilections for the "Chinese" in architecture. So pleased was he with much that he saw and sketched in the "Land of the Sun," that he afterwards published his notes in book form; and further, when called upon to prepare schemes for the improvement of the royal residences at Kew, he produced some Anglo-Chinese atrocities which gave great satisfaction to his distinguished patrons. They apparently satisfied the architect himself as well, for they were afterwards reproduced in book form. In the ranks of contemporary architects this "Chinese" work of Chambers aroused some antagonism and

much criticism, but he was prepared to defend his proceedings. He wrote: "Though I am publishing a work of Chinese architecture, let it not be suspected that my intention is to promote a taste so much inferior to the Antique and so very unfit for our climate; but a particular so interesting as the architecture of one of the most extraordinary nations in the universe cannot be a matter of indifference to the true lover of the arts . . ." Again, he says: "I cannot conclude without observing that several of my good friends have endeavoured to dissuade me from publishing this work, through a persuasion that it would hurt my reputation as an architect; and I pay so much deference to their opinion that I certainly should have desisted had it not been too far advanced before I knew their sentiments; yet I cannot conceive why it should be criminal in a traveller to give an account of what he has seen worthy of notice in China, any more than in Italy, France, or any other country; nor do I think it possible that any man should be so void of reason as to infer that an architect is ignorant in his profession merely from his having published designs of Chinese buildings."

Notwithstanding these protestations, and in face of all adverse criticism, he coquetted with his pagodas, dragons, and bells, and endeavoured to bring them into harmony with our Western requirements. All the while he kept the originals steadfastly in view.

In his description of the interior of a Chinese palace, he tells us: "The movables of the saloon consist of chairs, stools, and tables, made sometimes of rosewood, ebony, or lacquered work, and sometimes in bamboo only, which is cheap, and, nevertheless, very neat. When the movables are of wood, the seats of the stools are often of marble or porcelain, which, though hard to sit on, are far from being unpleasant in a climate where the summer heats are excessive."

With such furnishings in his mind he set to work to



REFERENCE IN TEXT. See pages 91–93

produce something on the same lines, with the results shown on the two plates in this chapter. Of the examples here illustrated, all that I need say is that they are not such as would be likely ever to appeal very strongly to English tastes; that the chairs are flimsy in appearance, and suitable only for production in cane or bamboo; and, finally, that all seem to indicate that the designer responsible for them was not blessed with an extensive knowledge of the technicalities of either cabinet-construction or chair making.

It only remains to state here that a noted English designer, Thomas Chippendale, became greatly interested in Chambers's "Chinese" extravagances, studied them, and came to the conclusion that, in the proper hands, something might be done in that direction. By its admission to the homes of royalty a certain demand seemed to have been created for such work. Chippendale consequently took them in hand; and what *he* made of them is fully demonstrated in my next chapter. This is my plea of justification for the inclusion in these pages of a note of Sir William Chambers's "Chinese" efforts.

# "CHIPPENDALE"

We have now arrived at that period in the history of the art and craft of cabinet designing and making when the names of leading members of their profession and trade became household words—for very often one man was proud to cultivate both, not deeming it beneath his dignity to stand at the bench and acquire a mastery over the tools and materials by which his ideas were to be carried out. I am inclined to think, nay, I am perfectly certain, that in this intimate practical knowledge, gained by actual experience, of the technicalities of the craft, is to be found the great secret of most of the success attained by the more prominent cabinet designers of the eighteenth century. Were such a state of things more prevalent to-day it would be far better for all concerned, but it is, unfortunately, the exception rather than the rule. There are several reasons for this falling-off, if I may so describe it. Let us briefly consider one or two of them.

In the first place, the average cabinet maker of the present day is so fully occupied with the technical side of his craft that he has but little time to study either historic styles or the principles of design. If he should by chance possess the ambition to do so, it must be accomplished at the sacrifice of both leisure and recreation ; a sacrifice for which he is, more likely than not, sneered at by his shopmates and snubbed by his employers. It is painful to have to say this, but an intimate acquaintance with the inner working of many cabinet factories enables me to insist emphatically upon the truth of this assertion. There are some exceptions, of course, to the rule : factories in which art is considered almost as

much as commercialism; but they are comparatively rare exceptions. Furthermore, the sub-division of labour, and the ever-growing introduction of improved tools, and specially of machinery of the time-and-labour-saving type, advantageous as they have been, and are, in very many ways, have been antagonistic to the development of the craftsman; tending rather to make a mere machine of the man himself—a simple "minder" of wheels, cogs, and levers—instead of training him to be an intelligent, thinking, and creative worker, who finds genuine pleasure in the pursuance of "the daily round, the common task," quite apart from the anticipation of Saturday's pay.

It is very rare in these times, though not impossible, to find a "shop" where any one workman completely carries through the construction of any "job" from start to finish, as was the custom many years ago. Nowadays, in nine-hundred-and-ninety-nine cases out of a thousand, every part that can possibly be cut and shaped by machinery—even to the very carving itself—is so cut and shaped, and all that remains is for the various component parts, arriving beautifully glass-papered and "clean" from the machine shop, to be fitted together and passed on to the polisher for the finishing touches. Let it be understood that I am not saying a single word against all this, but simply picturing what actually exists. What is one result of these modern methods of manufacture? In one sense they are undoubtedly beneficial. Through them those of us who are blessed with but a small share of worldly goods are enabled to become possessed of tastefully-designed, solid, and perfectly-constructed furniture, which, a hundred years ago, would only have been within the reach of the wealthy; thus our homes are made vastly the richer. This is one view of the case, and a most important one withal, which, however, is intentionally ignored by a certain school of critics, who are prone to indulge in a wholesale condemnation of machinery in any shape or form, and raise the cry of Ichabod! Ichabod! at the slightest

mention of it. To any one possessing the faintest spark of intelligence it is plain that labour-saving methods and devices such as those referred to are really productive of more good to the community at large than it is possible to estimate.

There is, however, another aspect of the question to be regarded; and it is that which inspires the doleful wailings, even the maledictions, of the critics to whom I have alluded. The man who can do his daily work in the modern steam factory and take a delight in the labour of his hands—what little labour of the hands there is—defying the enervating, and, artistically speaking, debasing influences of the conditions by which he is governed, must be of a very rare breed indeed; while for the youngster who is placed there to learn thoroughly the craft in all its branches, or even in one branch alone, the case is practically hopeless. Thus we are between the proverbial "two stools." Much might be said, again, on the decline of the apprenticeship system, a decline inevitable with the development of existing conditions, which are responsible for so much; but I must not be tempted to enter upon the discussion of that subject.

So much for the changes that have come about in respect of manufacture. Now let me say a brief word or two on the question of the training of the designer. It will, of course, be contended that the nation spends tens of thousands of pounds in founding and supporting museums, libraries, and technical and art schools and classes, where the young craftsman may learn all he needs and at a nominal expense, if he be so disposed. Are not gold, silver, and bronze medals, and book prizes, awarded annually for the best works submitted in competition? What then? Let anyone who would note the outcome of all this expenditure in the direction of school and class founding, instruction, and prize-giving, pay a visit to the annual exhibitions of these competitive works held at the Royal School of Art, South Kensington, and there form his own judgment as to the net result. So far, at all

events, as the designs for furniture and woodwork are concerned, the reports of the highly paid judges—eminent men, it is true, but rarely if ever including any *bonâ fide* representative of the craft, or, indeed, anyone who has made any mark at all in this particular branch of art—are almost invariably condemnatory; while in the eyes of the practical expert the display is always lamentably poor. It must be obvious, therefore, that there is something radically wrong some where; *where* the fault lies an examination of the systems of instruction specified by the Science and Art Department for adoption throughout the land will make perfectly clear. I need not say more here on this question than that one thing is absolutely certain, namely, the students are in no way to blame.

As I have already indicated, early in the eighteenth century the names of certain cabinet makers became prominent among their fellows, and they have been handed down to posterity. There is one which, by common consent—whether rightly or wrongly we shall presently see—is singled out pre-eminently from the rest, and that is the name of Thomas Chippendale. It is constantly on the lips of all who pose—I say "pose" advisedly—as authorities on old furniture; to them, indeed, it is a veritable "shibboleth"; and from the awesome respect paid to it by that section of the community who acquire their knowledge of such matters from the "Phyllises," "Angelines," and other fair mentors on household art who add such a charm to the pages of some of the ladies' papers, anyone ignorant of the subject would conclude that Chippendale was by far the most highly-endowed designer and cabinet maker of his age. He was nothing of the kind; and no one can claim with any measure of justification that he was. Why is it, then, that his name is so revered, and so frequently dinned into our ears? It is difficult to say exactly, but there are one or two reasons that may be put forward in answer to that query.

Chippendale, for one thing, was chief among the first to break away determinedly from traditions which had been held in veneration for very many years; furthermore, he practically originated a new style, or perhaps it would be more correct to say a series of styles, new to this country, for his work was many sided.

Of the early life of Chippendale few, if any, particulars are available, and we know little or nothing of the opening years of his business career. But that he was not long in "making a name," and, moreover, in winning commercial success, we do know; for we find him, at a comparatively early age, occupying extensive premises in a quarter of London which was then most fashionable, viz.:—Saint Martin's Lane. (The only remaining portion of these premises, by the way, has only recently come into the hands of the "house-breaker.") He enjoyed the distinguished patronage of the royalty and nobility of his time; in fact, it would seem that the belles and beaux of the courts of the early Georges came to regard the establishment of this famous old "upholder" as a convenient rendezvous where, whether they were in search of furniture or not, they might congregate together and discuss matters of moment, or the tittle-tattle of the day—the fall of Walpole; the "chances" at Culloden; the resignation of Pitt; the king's madness; the outbursts of Lord George Gordon; or, more probably still, the latest escapade of the Duchess of X——, Y——, or Z——. We can picture the dandies of the period, bewigged and bepowdered, vying with one another to win a smile, or the tap of a fan, from the reigning beauties in their paint and patches, by the relation of the latest choice bit of scandal from the coffee-house. How the brilliant colouring of their silks, satins, and velvets must have "set off" the rich mahogany environment of "Louis-Quinze," "Chinese," "Gothick," and "Ribbon-Back" creations placed there to tempt their patronage. And, to complete the picture, there was the crowd of chair-men, patiently wait-

ing with their gaily-bedizened chairs at the doors, to solicit favours or receive orders. There can be little doubt that many a time a visit to Chippendale was made to serve as an excuse for a morning gossip; and it can well be surmised that the prototypes of not a few of the characters in "The School for Scandal" were personally well known to this fashionable old tradesman. But I must not be tempted to draw upon imagination, enticing as it is to do so when dealing with a period so filled with romantic memories. Plain facts await our attention, and it is with facts that it is our first duty to deal here.

Before proceeding further, let me insist that the fact that Chippendale may be regarded as the pioneer, or, at any rate, as the chief among the pioneers of the movement which eventually resulted in the evolution of our late eighteenth-century furniture—which commanded the unrestrained admiration of the whole of the civilised world—furnishes no justification whatever for the all too common practice of lauding him and his work "to the skies."

It is very common to meet people—I personally have met them—supposed to have a knowledge of the history of furniture instructing art classes (they are or have been on boards of examiners appointed by our National Science and Art Department, and "on the press" their name is "Legion!") who regard as "Chippendale" everything designed or manufactured in this country during the period that elapsed between the years 1750 and 1800. And, the worst of it is, they make a point of posing as guides and counsellers in this branch of study, when all the time they ought, themselves, to be reading up the subject.

Not only has the name "Chippendale" fallen into common use as applied to styles with which it has nothing whatever to do, but, through being frequently employed in the trade to indicate a certain depth of colour in mahogany—a depth of colour for which age is solely responsible, and

which was never looked for by the old maker whose name is so constantly taken in vain—it has been taken up by writers who do not understand the why and wherefore of its application, and is vaguely used in such a manner as to convey the impression that it really refers to a special species of wood. Whether that wood was planted, grown, or discovered by our long-suffering cabinet maker is not divulged. In order to show that I am not attempting to indulge in cheap humour, I may mention an actual case of such misunderstanding which recently came within my experience. A lady of no ordinary culture was puzzled, on reading in one of the penny weekly magazines that a certain article of furniture, of which a sketch was given, should be "made in 'Chippendale.'" She came to me to ask if I could tell her *what wood "Chippendale" was!*

I need hardly explain, I think, that Chippendale was among the first in this country to employ, for the manufacture of furniture, Spanish mahogany of the finest figure and colour procurable. In the course of time the wood has, by a natural process, deepened in colour and attained a beautiful richness of tone, and to describe it in all its maturity the term "Chippendale mahogany" is generally used in the trade, though "Heppelwhite mahogany" or "Sheraton mahogany" would be quite as accurate. Owing to the great demand which has arisen for articles made in mahogany of this character, artificial means are employed nowadays to produce a colour and richness as near the original as possible, and, as a means of identification, the term has passed from the workshop to the trade catalogue, from the trade catalogue to its retail companion, thence to the salesman, and so on to the general public. Why it should be termed "*Chippendale* mahogany" particularly is hard to explain, for exactly the same wood was used by scores of other eighteenth-century cabinet makers, and has undergone precisely the same natural process of deepening.

My contention is, then, that Chippendale has been elevated to far too lofty a pedestal. Contemporaneously with him there were other and cleverer men in the field, who, following his example, without copying his methods, carved out a way for themselves entirely by the force of their own abilities, and created individual and distinct styles, between which and that of their great competitor there existed little or no relationship. To give him all the credit for that for which he was in no way responsible, and which, moreover, surpassed anything that he ever produced, is obviously extremely unjust to others.

We must not, however, go to the opposite extreme, and fail to accord honour where honour is due; and it must be recognised that the way for the later eighteenth-century cabinet makers and designers was, to a certain extent, prepared by Chippendale, whose design book—"The Gentleman's and Cabinet Maker's Director," published in 1754—was really the first work of its kind of any importance to make its appearance in this country. Original copies of this are now so excessively scarce as to be practically unobtainable; even badly damaged and most imperfect ones are eagerly snapped up whenever they come into the market, which is but rarely, and "fetch" as much as £30, £40, and £50. The complete book has, I believe, been reproduced more than once, and even copies of the reproduction are now difficult to obtain, as dealers and collectors have only been too glad to get possession of, and pay high prices for, them.

It has already been pointed out that of Chippendale himself as an individual practically few biographical details are obtainable, but we need not concern ourselves much on that account, as they are not essential to our present purpose, though, were they available, they might perhaps enhance the interest of our study. It is, however, of the work and not the man that we have to form an opinion as complete and correct as may be.

Proceeding to discover and deal in order with the leading characteristics of the style to which this chapter is devoted, I may say at once that those characteristics are numerous, and to gain a thorough knowledge of them all is a matter which calls for the expenditure of considerable time and not a little study. Fortunately, however, for the student, connoisseur, and collector, they are most unmistakably marked, and, therefore, present little or no difficulty in distinguishing when once known. As is only natural, extraordinarily faithful copies of original pieces have been manufactured in vast numbers, particularly during recent years. They are still being turned out by the van-load, and to distinguish the spurious from the genuine—spurious, that is to say, so far as date of production is concerned—is not by any means so simple a matter; indeed, in order to succeed, we need long practical experience. To the question of style, however, and not that of authenticity, we shall devote our attention principally.

In the preparation—I use the word "preparation" intentionally, as of many examples we can hardly say "origination"—of his designs, Chippendale appropriated ideas often and without hesitation from many sources; at one time dallying with the "Gothick," as it was then called; at another with the Chinese as rendered by Sir William Chambers; and nearly always keeping up an intimate converse with the French. From the last named, indeed, he drew most freely for inspiration, and to that section, therefore, of his work which is most strongly influenced by it we will turn our attention first; for examples belonging to that phase are the most numerous.

It is, of course, only natural that a few of the very earliest productions of this designer and maker should possess some, at least, of the characteristics of the style which prevailed in this country from the end of the seventeenth century to the time that saw the commencement of his business career, namely the "Queen-Anne," yet the extent to which they did

so was much less than might reasonably have been anticipated. Indeed, it was evidently his fixed and unalterable determination to get as far away from the "Queen-Anne" as possible—whatever use he may have been inclined to make of other styles—and it must be admitted that he generally succeeded in so doing. What few features he did retain for a time will be duly noted as we proceed.

Though Chippendale did not copy, to any appreciable extent, from the contemporary or prior productions of his own countrymen, I must repeat that he was not averse to borrowing from other sources. As a matter of fact, he was seldom sufficiently self-reliant to depend solely upon his own genius for the origination of new ideas; and, bold as it may appear to be on my part to make the assertion, I should class him as one of the greatest appropriators—if I may employ the term—of his own, or, for the matter of that, of any other time.

At that period in his career when he was of an age to decide what course he should adopt and pursue, there were two styles in furniture and decoration which shared the favour of the public on the other side of the Channel—the "Louis-Quatorze," the popularity of which was gradually waning, and the "Louis-Quinze," which was supplanting it by leaps and bounds. It is evident to all who have closely followed the development of his work, that this master set himself, with fixed determination, to make a careful study of both those old French modes, and that he did so to such an extent as to become completely enamoured of them. So great indeed was the fascination they exerted upon his mind, that everything he did for a time revealed their influence in a most marked degree. In his complete mastery of the "Louis-Quatorze" and "Louis-Quinze," particularly of the latter, the secret of both Chippendale's strength and weakness, and success and failure, is to be found. On the one hand, it endowed many of his designs with a piquancy and

consequent charm which they would not otherwise have possessed; on the other, it led him to indulge in extravagances which, as we shall see later, were altogether unpardonable. (When I speak of Chippendale's "success" and "failure," the former must be taken in a commercial and the latter in an artistic sense: for many of his greatest atrocities sold far better in his own times, and sell far better to-day, than did examples which were characterised by better taste. It is, unfortunately, not at all uncommon for such to be the case.)

It was not, however, from the French alone that Chippendale borrowed. The "Gothick" came in for a share, though not a great share, of his attention. He also tried to, and, as a matter of fact, did improve upon the futile attempt strenuously made by Sir William Chambers to adapt Chinese forms and ideas to our Western requirements; endeavouring to create a sort of "Anglo-Chinese" style which would not be out of place in the British home.

Thus, as will be apparent already, there are at least three distinct phases of "Chippendale," each equally authentic, and each of which will be duly considered in turn; while mention must be made of a fourth later. We will commence with the "French," as being the most important.

If any justification be demanded by the reader for my assertion that Chippendale became, so to speak, saturated with the spirit of the "Louis-Quatorze" and Louis-Quinze," it will easily be found not only on one but on all the plates included in this chapter. The designs here given furnish ample proof, for the satisfaction of all who may object to my "point of view," that my judgment has not merely been formed after the examination of a few solitary and exceptional examples discovered here and there. It must be noted, moreover, that the models illustrated are absolutely characteristic in every respect, are reproduced from "The Gentleman's and Cabinet Maker's Director" itself,

and include the very cream of Chippendale's designs. No possible exception to their selection or introduction can, therefore, be taken.

Yet there *is* a certain individuality about the majority, though not all, of the pieces illustrated, which marks them most distinctly and unmistakably as "Chippendale," so that, permeated by French influence as they are, they could not be described with any degree of accuracy as in the French Style. Take, for example, all the chairs shown on Plates I., II., III., IV., V., VI., and IX.

In what, then, reposes the secret of this individuality? The explanation is not far to seek. The truth is that Chippendale elected, as a general rule, to follow on the lines of the Parisian chair maker in the matter of detail rather than in that of form, as will be apparent from an examination of the chairs referred to; and, although he indulged to his heart's content in the employment of Rococo *coquillage*, it was generally employed by him—I am speaking of his chairs now—to "dress up" forms of a comparatively simple character. The same remark applies, though in a smaller degree, to his cabinet work, but that we shall discuss later.

The general outline, or shaping, of the majority of "Chippendale-French" chair backs varies but slightly from that of the model indicated in Fig. 1, Plate I.; therefore little or no difficulty will be experienced in classifying them correctly. The "Chippendale-Chinese" chairs, it is true, differ from these almost in every point; but they form a distinct group and will be dealt with by themselves.

The backs of chairs of the type at present under review are nearly always slightly wider at the top than in the middle —that is to say, where the back legs join the seat—the width diminishing downwards in a slight, indeed almost imperceptible, though extremely graceful, curve, not by any means easy to imitate. The legs, which, in the back, sometimes have the corners rounded off, and which taper upwards in most

subtle shapings, usually "finish square" beneath the seat, and sometimes, though not very frequently, terminate in a shaped, and occasionally decorated, toe. Sometimes they form a right angle to the seat (underneath), and at others curve slightly backwards to the toe (see accompanying illustration). The backs of the "Chippendale-French" chairs *always* curve backwards to the top, as shown. These characteristics may be regarded as unmistakable and distinguishing features; and where they are found exactly as described we may be pretty confident in pronouncing judgment. With regard, however, to the filling in of the space between the upper part of the two back legs —that is to say the back proper—the variations to be met with are most numerous. Their number, though, need not cause any misgiving, for the variations, many as they are, and complicated as they may appear to be, are so closely allied one to another that to identify them at a glance, after even comparatively little study, is the simplest thing imaginable.

Showing shaping of back and legs as viewed from the side

As to this filling in: a close and careful examination of the backs illustrated, comparing one with another, will result in the discovery that a certain class of shaping, closely resembling two capital C's placed back-to-back in all manner of positions—frequently inverted, sometimes "frilled," and generally terminating in scrolls or foliations—was very much favoured by this designer. The precise nature of the detail referred to is made perfectly clear by the sketch given opposite, and the method of its application may be seen by reference to the two chairs on Plate I., and others on Plates II., III., and IV. To a greater or less degree, it recurs in nearly every one, the curves being more or less accentuated as occasion demands in order to fill the space to be so decorated.

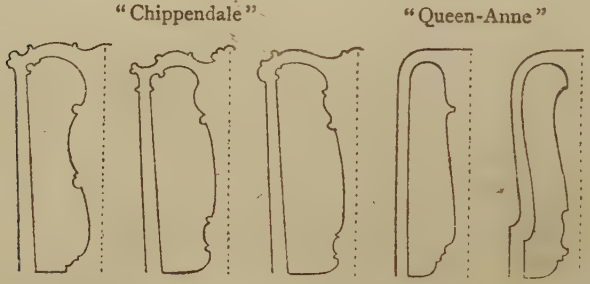
It is interesting to note, in passing, the light in which this detail was regarded by Isaac Ware, a King's Surveyor, who was contemporary with Chippendale. He wrote: "It is our misfortune to see, at this time, an unmeaning scrawl of C's, inverted and looped together, taking the place of Greek and Roman Elegance, even in our most inexpensive decorations. It is called the French, and let them have the praise of it; the Gothic Shafts, and Chinese, are not beyond it, nor below it, in poorness of imagination." Ware, I need hardly say, was a disciple of the Inigo Jones school.

Showing employment of the C-form of detail

(*See page* 106 *for reference*)

Having briefly summed up the salient features of the "Chippendale-French" chair back preparatory to the examination of individual examples, let us now turn for a short space to the matter of legs. The belief is entertained by many people that Chippendale employed the square leg chiefly, to the exclusion of other forms. The prevalence of this erroneous impression is to be accounted for by the fact that, in his less expensive chairs, he usually did so; and those, of course, constitute the class most frequently to be met with nowadays, as the number manufactured, in the natural order of things, far exceeded that of the more costly type. But the

square leg was by no means his favourite; twelve of the examples selected for illustration here are conclusive proof to the contrary. As a matter of fact, we are justified in asserting that the "cabriole" form, inspired, of course, by the "Louis-Quinze," ranked first in his estimation. The shaping of the "Chippendale cabriole," however, is generally less pronounced, and consequently more subtle, than in the French originals, though more often than not it is enriched with carved detail of one kind or another which is borrowed either from the "Louis-Quatorze" or the "Louis-Quinze." It should

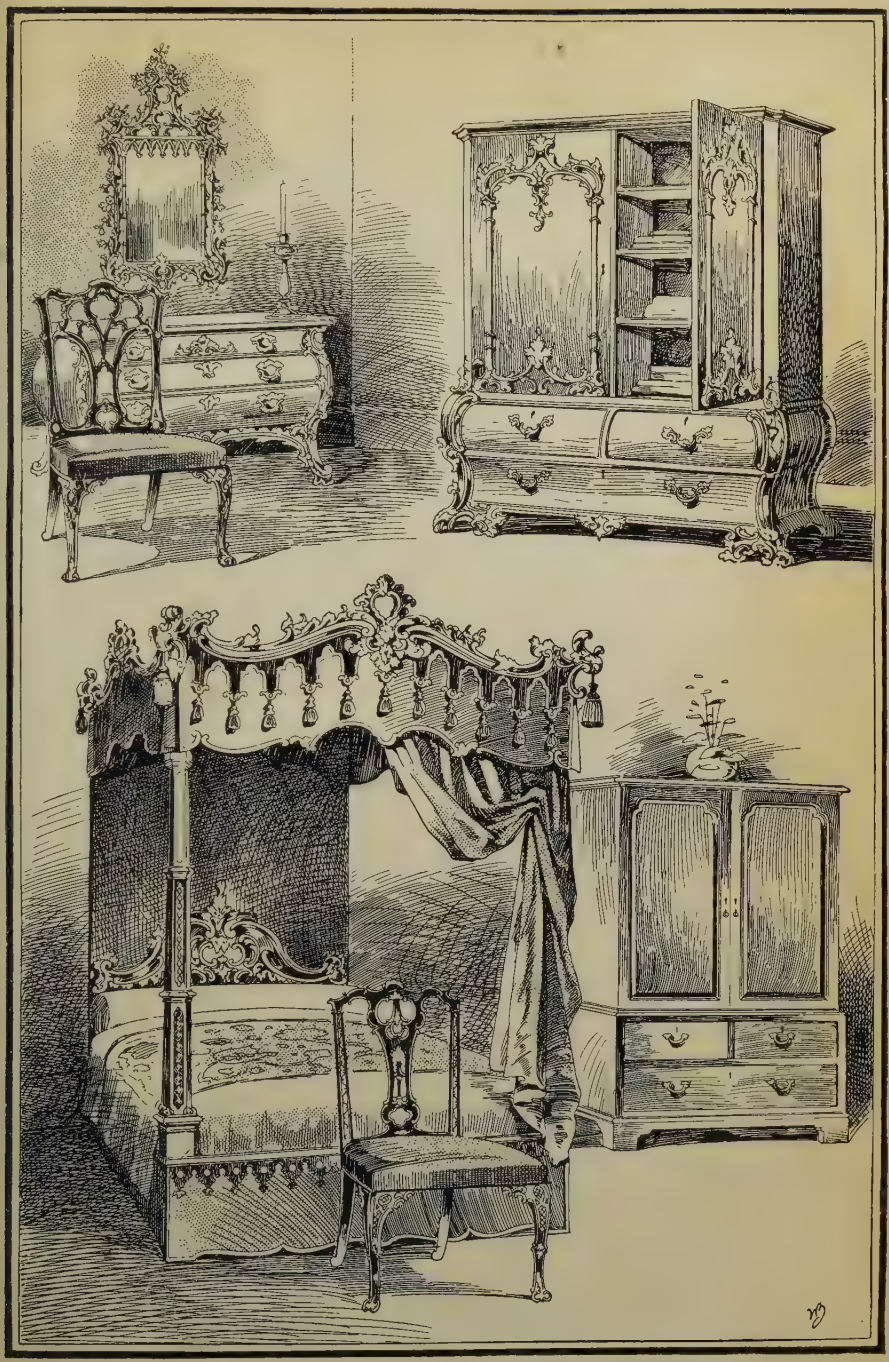



Showing relationship between "Chippendale" and "Queen-Anne" Chair Backs

(*See below for reference*)

be noted, moreover, that this detail very frequently includes the C-like shaping, carved on the corners of the *inside* of the knee, as shown in the sketch. This recurs constantly.

I have remarked, as may be remembered, that there are some few points of resemblance between the "Chippendale" and the "Queen-Anne": the introduction of the "cabriole" leg is one. As to this point, it may be explained that, in reality, the one employed by Chippendale is more closely akin to the "Queen-Anne" form than to the French. Apart from this, there is yet another mark of resemblance in the two styles,



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| | Page | | Page |
|---|---|---|---|
| Chairs. | See 79, 105, 106 | Wall mirror. | See 111 |
| Commode. | ,, 109 | Bedstead. | ,, 120 |
| | | Lower wardrobe | ,, 122 |

which will be seen by reference to the backs illustrated in this chapter and those appearing in the chapter on "Queen-Anne." A comparison of the two series will show that the outlines of the centre "balusters," or "splats," in some of the "Chippendale" backs are nearly related to many which were common to the preceding style, though the details with which they are enriched, and, indeed, the general treatment, are vastly different.

As regards our preliminary summing-up of the "Chippendale" chair, it must be noted finally that the frame of the seat seldom, if ever, forms a rectangular figure, but is wider at the front than at the back. By the adoption of this form, ample seating accommodation is provided without necessitating a back of clumsy and ungainly width—a most important point where grace of shape is a desideratum. Coming now to the "Chippendale" cabinet work which shows the strongest evidence of French influence, we find that, in truth, there is very little which does not reveal this designer's passion for the Rococo in one guise or another, though there are some few pieces—to be considered later—which are altogether innocent of it. Those, however, as we shall see presently, are simple almost to the point of severity. In the *construction* of his "carcase work" Chippendale did not adopt French lines to any very great extent; that is to say, not so far as general outward shaping was concerned. Instances in which he departed from that rule, however, and emulated the "Louis-Quatorze" and "Louis-Quinze" in that direction are not unknown; indeed, two are illustrated in Plate I., where we have a chest of drawers, or "commode," and wardrobe, in which the *bombé* form is introduced. Such examples, however, are most rare, and command very high prices when obtainable at all.

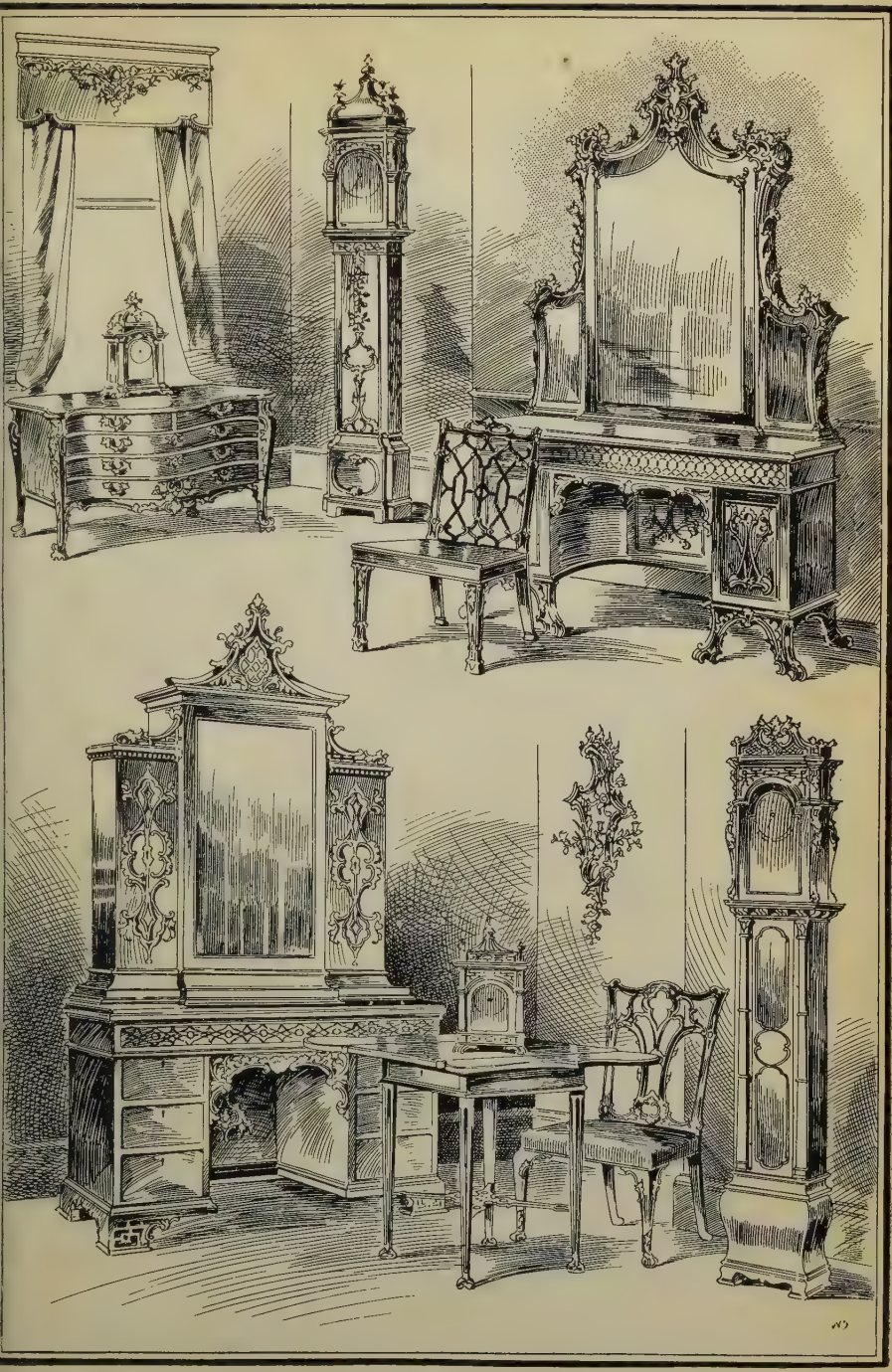
Plan of typical "Chippendale" chair seat

This designer more generally, in fact almost invariably,

contented himself by building-up a solidly-made, and, usually, unpretentious, "carcase" of sensible proportions; when that was accomplished, he set about planning his scheme for the embellishment of the surfaces of the doors, drawer-fronts, and other available spaces, imparting a definite character to the simple foundation or basis by drawing upon his stock-in-trade of rococo detail; and no one can deny that he made pretty free use of it.

This detail, it must be understood, was not always carved into the solid wood of the drawer-fronts, doors, or other places for which it was destined, as, in the opinion of many critics, it should have been. It was in most instances cut out and carved separately, and then "pinned" and glued on, and was, therefore, simple to conceive and carry out, involving, at the same time, a very insignificant outlay. By the means described, the most intricate and elaborate schemes, whose execution in solid carving would have been terribly costly, could be turned out to the heart's content of the maker. Some exception may be taken to the instability of this class of enrichment. "Pins" are liable to rust, snap, and work loose; the best of glue *will* perish in time; and when any of those eventualities come about the security of this applied carving has vanished. It can be "stuck on" again, of course, but the performance of such repairing, in nine cases out of ten, has been deferred until the recalcitrant pieces have disappeared never to return.

In this detail once more we have a persistent repetition of the inevitable C's, accompanied by leafage, "shells," scrolls, "frilling" or "scalloping," "stalactites," and almost every other variety of rococo detail. In the more elaborate pieces they are thrown together in such profusion and with such a total disregard of any consistency that the result is far from pleasing or decorative. These rococo extravagances are not confined by any means to the situations I have indicated. They break out again with renewed vigour in the pediments,



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| Chairs. | See 105, 106 | Commode. | See 112 |
| Girandole. | ,, 111 | Clock cases. | ,, 126 |

many of which are fearful and wonderful to behold, and cause us to sigh longingly for a return to the dignified simplicity and restraint of the good old "Queen-Anne," with something closely resembling which, by-the-bye, Chippendale does favour us occasionally, but all too rarely. But it is not my province to indulge too freely in criticism of this point; my aim is simply to make as clear as possible the main characteristics of the style itself "with all faults as lotted."

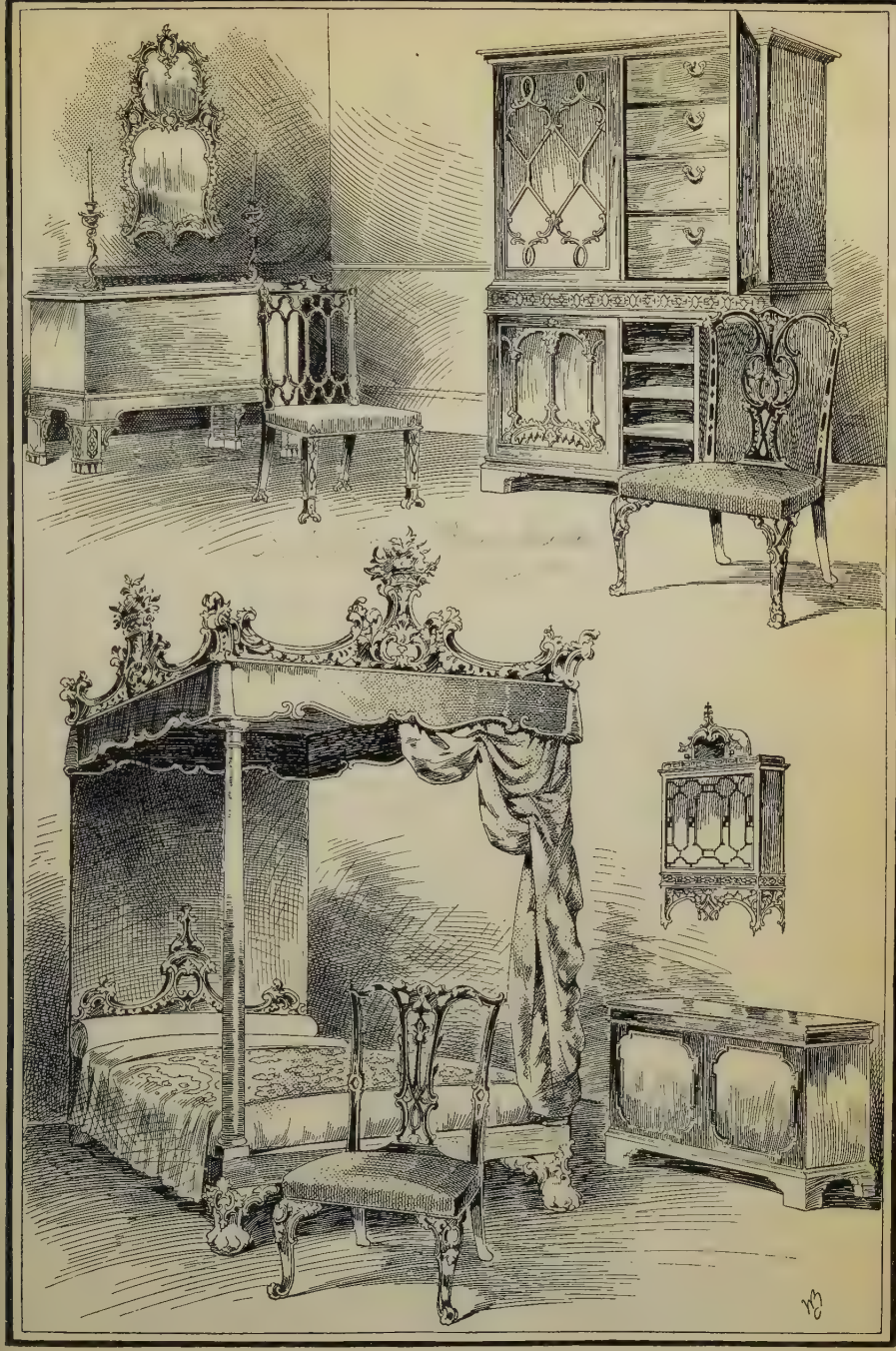
As a further illustration of the extent to which this cabinet maker sometimes allowed his leaning towards the Rococo to carry him beyond the bounds of all reason, and to lead him to the perpetration of all manner of absurdities, I may refer to the frame of the wall-mirror, Plate I., girandole (candle-bracket) Plate II.; mirror, Plate III.; and other similar pieces in the following plates. Apart from their unredeemed ugliness these examples are constructionally open to very grave objection, and for the following reason. Much of the pierced and carved detail is really too delicate to be produced in wood, for, obviously, a great deal of it *must* unavoidably be cut across the grain; this being the case, as anyone who possesses the smallest knowledge of the nature of wood will be well aware, a very slight pressure is sufficient to cause breakage. If cast or forged in metal no serious objection could be urged against them on the score of construction; but in brittle wood they invite disaster, and are, therefore, to say the least, undesirable as articles of furniture for everyday use.

No review of "Chippendale" would be complete without special mention of his famous "ribbon-back" chairs, which have time and again been singled out for particular praise by writers who are looked up to by a certain section of the community. I have, therefore, included a couple of examples of that type, which will be found on Plate IV. Here we have constructional ornament with a vengeance! Whether it is to be defended or condemned is a question which opens up great possibilities of discussion, and many supporters of both sides

would be found. In the types under review, however, I say most emphatically, and my opinion may be accepted for what it is worth, that this constructional ornament is absolutely and utterly indefensible. An effort has been made by one writer of some repute to justify the employment of the fluttering and knotted wooden ribbon as a support for the back by claiming it as a direct descendant of the old Celtic interlacing. That argument is as far fetched as it could well be, and will not stand the test of proof. The Celtic knots and interlacing were purely conventional and decorative, being kept entirely subservient to construction; while Chippendale's "ribbon" is ostensibly as close an imitation of the real thing as it is possible to produce in wood; it does not decorate construction, it is constructive in itself. We can only account for the popularity of the "Ribbon-Back," so far as I can see, by remembering that it belongs to what may be described as the "Pretty-Pretty School," which, I need hardly say, is always certain to be popular, especially with the fairer sex.

We have observed that Chippendale, even when he was borrowing from and adapting the French modes most extensively, generally stamped his productions with the mark of his own individuality, but I must not omit to point out that there are exceptions to that rule. The little commode by the window on Plate II., the screen on Plate IV., and two of the arm-chairs on Plates VII. and IX., though they appeared in "The Gentleman's and Cabinet Maker's Director," are not "Chippendale" but pure and unadulterated French. It would not be at all surprising to discover that they were copied direct from some Parisian originals, or perhaps from a French cabinet maker's design sheets or books.

It is not necessary, I think, to enlarge further upon this section of Chippendale's work, for, by a careful study of the accompanying illustrations, supplemented by the explanatory remarks and criticisms I have been so bold as to offer, the reader should be able to acquire a thorough and exhaustive



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| Chairs. | See 79, 105, 106 | Chests. | See 122 |
| Wall mirror. | ,, 111 | Press. | ,, 124 |
| Bedsteads. | ,, 120 | Wall cupboard. | ,, 126 |

See also page 245 re French chair legs

knowledge of every salient feature of "Chippendale-French," sufficient indeed to entitle him to be regarded as an authority upon the subject.

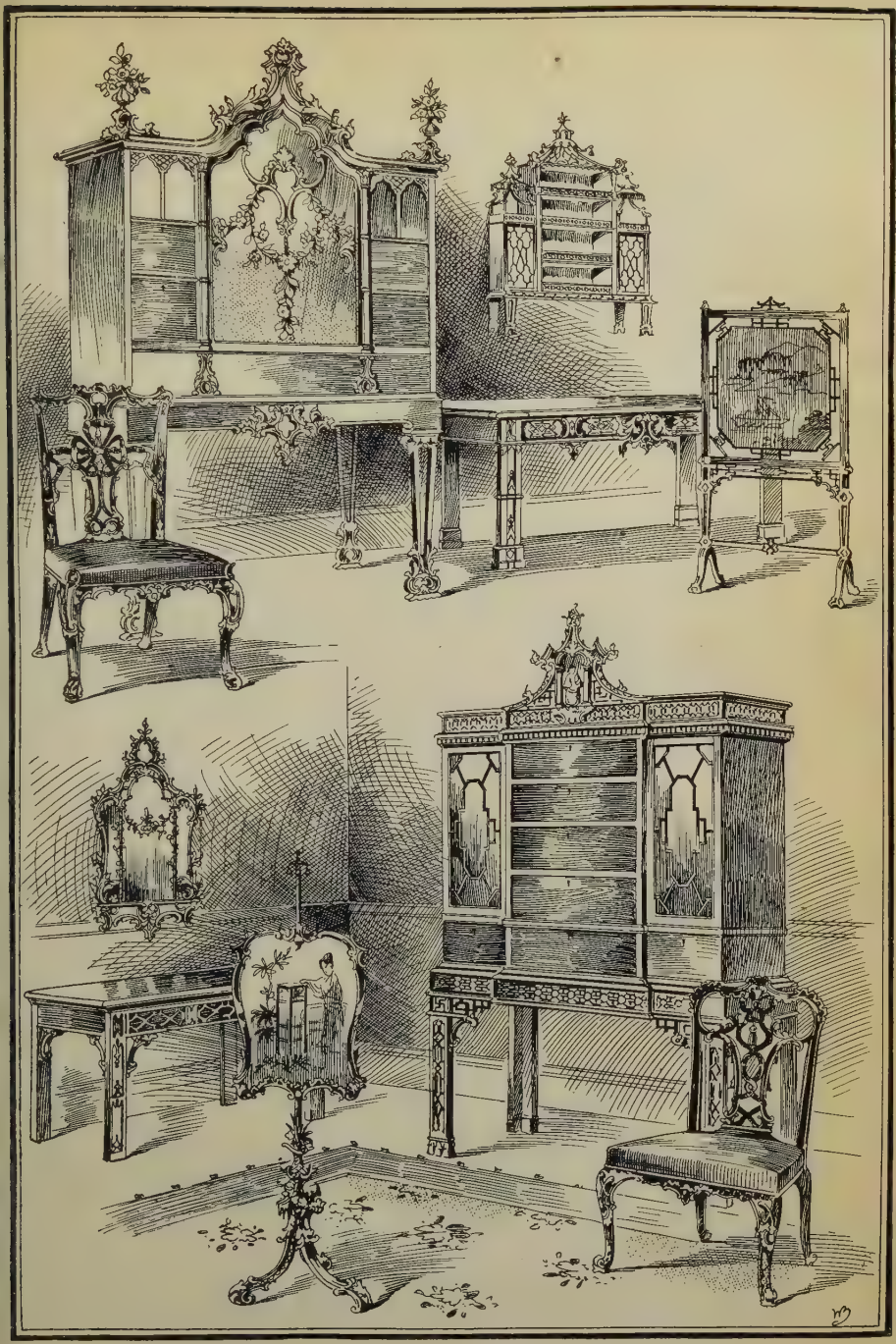
I will turn now to another phase of this designer's work. Having dealt with him in his French moods, it will be interesting to see what measure of success attended his efforts to follow in the footsteps of Sir William Chambers, whose interest in all things Chinese led him, as we have seen in a previous chapter, to publish a series of plates devoted to the architecture and furniture of the Land of the Sun, and to endeavour to induce the British cabinet maker to take a leaf occasionally out of the book of his "Celestial" fellow-craftsmen. Chambers's enterprise was *not* successful, for reasons which may be discussed further presently; hence we are naturally curious to discover whether Chippendale met with any better fortune, and, if so, why?

First, let us compare the designs which the former published with those prepared and presented to the public by the "upholder" of Saint Martin's Lane. It was a case of friendly competition between architect and furniture designer—both of them, by-the-bye, enjoying the special patronage of royalty—and it is for us to judge now which of the two carried off the laurels.

I have said that the favoured architect of George the First, notwithstanding his ability, failed in this direction, and I will not make such an assertion without furnishing proof of its truth, and, if possible, explaining the cause of failure. That the suggestions which came from his pencil were far more faithful, in every particular, to the original Chinese by which they were inspired than were those of Chippendale is incontestable, and that fact is one of the main reasons why they "fell flat." That which may be in every way admirably suited to the Chinese home must not necessarily be expected to appeal with success to our Western tastes, as was practically illustrated in the case in point. Chambers's

designs, therefore, went but little further than the pages of the book in which they first saw the light. Another reason for their failure was the lack, on the part of their designer, of a knowledge of the technicalities of cabinet and chair construction—an ignorance common to the majority of architects even to-day; and it is equally clear that he did not by any means fully appreciate the requirements of the interior of the English home, gifted as he may have been in planning and superintending its erection.

His efforts, nevertheless, were not altogether fruitless in the end, for his designs found their way into the hands of Chippendale, who, struck by the idea which had inspired their production, decided that there might be "something in it." He determined eventually that it might be worth his while to bring that "something" out. It was fresh ground, at all events, and he made up his mind to cultivate it for a time. Chippendale was fully equipped with the practical knowledge which was, of course, essential, and which Chambers lacked, and he thoroughly understood the requirements of the British public so far as furniture was concerned, for he had made a special study of their fads and fancies—with no inconsiderable profit to himself. As a natural consequence, he met with far greater success in his endeavours to accomplish what was really an almost impossible task. Chambers's Anglo-Chinese furniture was, as we have seen, flimsy in appearance; his designs give us the impression of being more especially adapted for execution in cane or bamboo than in sturdier and more durable woods. Chippendale, of course, saw at once that, though such productions might possibly do occasionally for those grotesque extravagances which aped Orientalism, and were, to a certain extent, in vogue as smoking-rooms, in winter gardens, etc., in the palaces and mansions of the royalty and nobility of those times—such as the Royal Pavilion at Brighton—they did not in any way answer the requirements



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| Chairs. | See 105, 106, 111, 245 |
| Screens. | ,, 112, 115, 126, 245 |
| Wall bookshelves. | ,, 117, 126 |

of the living rooms of the average English home; and he was perfectly right in coming to that conclusion. He, therefore, set himself to create an Anglo-Chinese style on his own account, and one, withal, which might be rendered in his beloved mahogany; one which would not only have sufficient stability of construction to inspire confidence in the minds of those for whose use it was intended, but which would, at the same time, appeal to their taste for novelty.

The principal feature of this phase of "Chippendale" is, of course, the ever-present lattice work, to which it owes whatever measure of Chinese character it may possess, and in the invention of which this designer displayed not a little ingenuity.

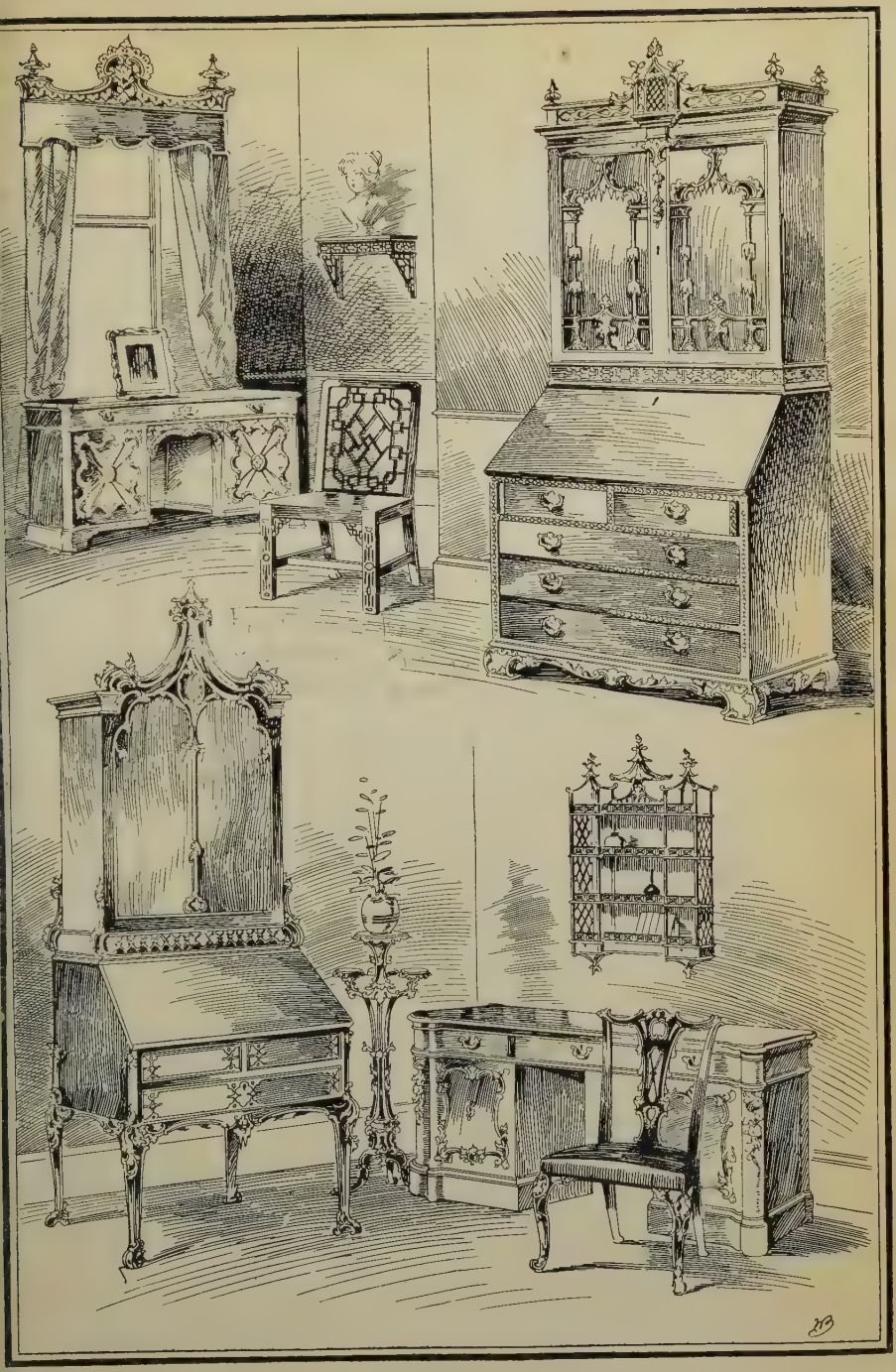
If we consider the "Chippendale-Chinese" chairs first, in order to avoid all possibility of misunderstanding or confusion, it must at once be made clear that their general form differs very greatly from that of those which we have already studied; whereas we shall see that there is little or no radical variation in the constructional outline of the cabinet work. The small "Horse" screen on Plate IV.; the first of the two chairs on Plate V.; the two lower cabinets and the chair on Plate VI.; the upper arm-chair and "small" chair on Plate IX.; the two chairs and table on Plate X.; and two chairs on Plate XI., are admirable examples of this style; and with their forms and detail "in our eye," there can be no possible difficulty in deciding what is "Chippendale-Chinese" and what is not.

It should be noticed particularly that, in the chairs, the rectangular form of back is most frequently employed, the top and sides being perfectly straight for nearly the whole of the length, but sometimes rounded very slightly where they join at the corners. The top rail of the back was occasionally shaped, by way of variation (see Plates VI. and XI.), but not to any very great extent; while, here and there, in order to put a finishing touch, so to speak, to the

lattice work, scraps of coquillage were introduced, though generally kept well within bounds, as the illustrations will indicate.

In dealing with cabinet work Chippendale found that it was not so easy to impart to his productions the desired Chinese character as when dealing with chairs. The respective conditions controlling the construction of both were by no means the same. In chairs he had what was to all intents and purposes a mere framework of wood, the open spaces of which could be filled with any decorative detail that his fancy might dictate. This framing formed a perfect setting for the lattice work of which he made such good use. But with cabinets, chests, and other articles of that description the case was very different. In these, plain filled-in expanses had to be treated instead of open spaces, and for such the ordinary lattice, by reason of its very nature, was of but little use. Notwithstanding the fact that the lattice itself could not be requisitioned, it was obviously essential to secure a similar effect by some means or another if the Chinese character were to be retained. Chippendale surmounted the difficulty with great ingenuity. He sketched-out his lattice-like patterns for the enrichment of cabinet work, but made them much more delicate and intricate than those intended for the backs and arms of chairs; he then had them cut, by means of the fret-saw, in thin mahogany. This, of course, was far too fragile to stand without a supporting background of some kind; it was therefore "planted-on" or "applied" to the solid foundations afforded by the wood with which the spaces to be decorated were already filled-in, and was firmly fixed in position there by means of "pins" (tiny nails or "brads") and glue.

Although he had succeeded so far in securing a certain degree of the requisite flavour in his Chinese confections, Chippendale was not content until he had made it stronger. He turned his attention therefore to the pagoda—a form I



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| Chairs. | See 115 |
| Wall bookshelves | ,, 117 |
| Secretaires. | See 124, 245 |
| Wall bracket. | ,, 126 |

need hardly say, essentially Chinese—and he was not to be baffled. Here was the very thing for his pediment; nothing could be better. They had to be touched up, of course, with a little coquillage; the inevitable C's were fitted in somehow here and there; top-heavy naturalesque bunches of flowers came in handy as finials; and the whole, with other nondescript detail, resulted in those strange medleys which we see in the pediments of the wall bookcases on Plates IV. and V., the two lower cabinets on Plate VI., and the hanging bookshelves on Plates X. and XI. To sum up briefly the total outcome of this experiment, the chairs proved to be a greater success than the cabinet work. They were quaint and not altogether unattractive in appearance; roomy, and, by the aid of a generous supply of loose cushions, might be made fairly comfortable. The cabinets, on the contrary, I am disposed to regard rather in the light of freaks; though we may perhaps say of them, as was said of the curate's egg, immortalised by our friend "Mr. Punch," that they are "good in parts."

But the applied fret was in every way too useful a means of enrichment to be confined to the Chinese productions exclusively; and, having once discovered and perfected it, Chippendale employed it freely in many designs other than those based upon the household gods of the "Celestials." It was, in the first place, most effective; and, what was equally important, the use of the fret-saw cost but little. The process of production was still further cheapened by clamping a number of the thin sheets or strips of wood together and piercing them all to the desired pattern at one and the same time. Indeed, they can not only be cut more expeditiously in this way, but even better than singly, for the saw obtains a surer "grip," and cuts altogether more satisfactorily.

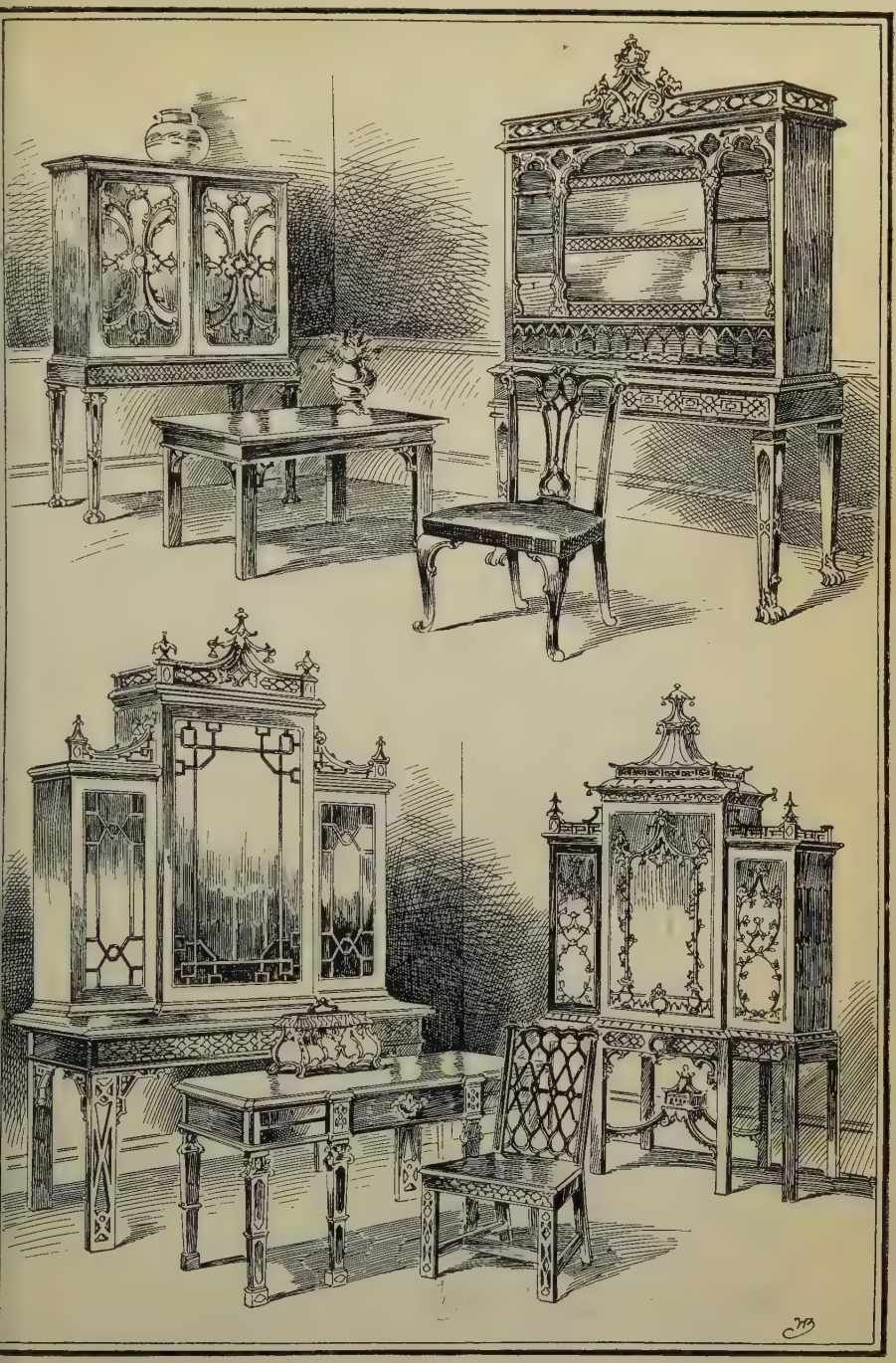
There are few situations in which the applied fret cannot be used, so we find it introduced by Chippendale to square chair and table legs and similar supports, as shown in the

accompanying illustrations, as well as to panels, pilasters, friezes, drawer-fronts, and the like.

In order to convey a more adequate idea of the character of these frets than we can glean from the necessarily impressionistic indication of them in the sketches of complete pieces of furniture, I have had a number drawn to a larger scale, and included with other characteristic detail on Plate VIII.

I have mentioned that this designer, during his search in all manner of different fields for ideas, coquetted now and again with the Gothic, or "Gothick" as he preferred to call it; but that old style failed to gain his favour to any great extent, or maybe it proved too severe for him, and unrelentingly resisted his advances. Be that as it may, he did not make much progress in that direction; but we must see what he *did* manage to do. In Fig. 12, Plate VIII., just the end of a "Chippendale-Gothic" commode appears, which, we must admit, is not altogether devoid of a certain quaint charm; while a touch of the same feeling is present in the press or cabinet on Plate VI. (as also in one or two other examples), though here it is mixed up with French and other detail of a hybrid nature. With these few pieces of "Chippendale-Gothic" before us, however, we do not experience any very keen regret that their originator did not proceed much further on those lines.

Reverting, for a moment, to the frets, it is important to point out that they are almost always purely geometrical, and therefore repetitive, in design, consisting principally of a succession of rectangular repeating figures, so interwoven one with another as to present an appearance of great intricacy. Curves of any kind were not often introduced into them, though they do occur in some cases. In these we find ovals, circles, and segments of such figures, as in Fig. 1, Plate VIII. The student and collector will do well to bear this characteristic in mind, as its remembrance is a great aid to identification.



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| Chairs. | See 79, 105, 115 |
| Upper cabinet. | ,, 118 |
| Lower cabinet. | See 115 |
| Door tracery. | ,, 124 |
| Tea caddy. | ,, 126 |

In writing about the furniture of any part of the eighteenth century, we must be careful not to omit reference to the four-post bedsteads of the particular period to be dealt with. These constituted a most important factor in the homes of the wealthier classes in the old days, long before the productions of the forge and foundry had seriously invaded the sleeping apartment and provided it with "black," "black-and-brass," and "all brass" (*vide* the furnishing catalogue) creations, with their patent woven-wire and spring mattresses, which supplanted the sturdy oak and rich mahogany productions with their elaborate draping.

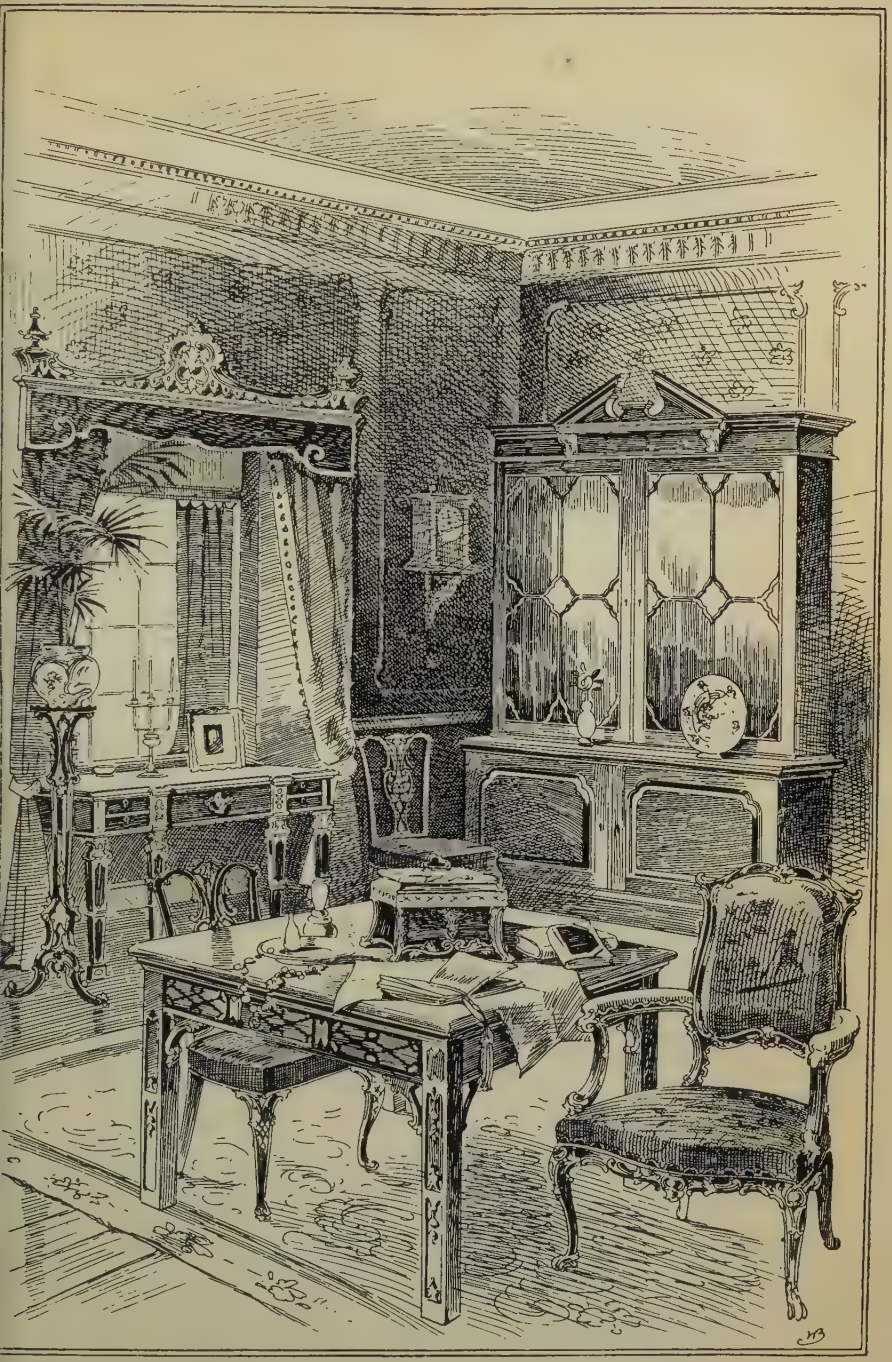
It is not in any way necessary for us to discuss the respective advantages of the wood, as opposed to the metal, bedstead, however greatly we may regret the disappearance of the former from our midst; and I will rest content with simply placing on record the various types that were to the fore at different periods, leaving the question of their healthiness for hygienists to fight out between themselves. In justice, however, to the modern manufacturer, I must draw attention to the fact that it is now easy to obtain wooden bedsteads which are in every way absolutely free from the insanitary disadvantages which, owing to their method of construction, were inseparable from the older types. The frames of these modern successors are made of iron, and the mattresses of woven wire of the cleanliest and most approved description.

The collector who may be desirous of adding genuine old eighteenth-century "four posters" to his store of treasures may at the outset be warned that no small difficulty will be experienced in doing so, for they are but rarely to be found in their entirety. For this difficulty two reasons may be advanced. In the first place, the number originally made was comparatively small; in the second, as bedsteads of this class have fallen almost entirely into disuse, those which survived until eighteenth-century styles came again into favour after

the "dark age" of the early-Victorian period, have been "cut down," and the various parts have undergone transformation into other articles. The pillars have, more often than not, been converted into graceful pedestals for the reception and support of candelabra, lamps, busts, small statuary, and other ornamental knick-knacks. It may perhaps strike us as a pity that this should have been done, and some may regard it as an act of vandalism; but we cannot fail to recognise that they admirably serve the new purpose to which they have been put. It must be remembered, too, that even were the complete "four poster" obtainable, the most ardent of private collectors would find it somewhat of "a white elephant" if it had to be accommodated within the limits of the average "villa residence" of to-day. It was evidently Chippendale's aim in designing his bedsteads to endow them with as great an appearance of imposing grandeur as possible, and he relied for effect almost as much on the draping with which they were dressed up as on the woodwork. Indeed, he considerably "overdid" most of his creations in that direction, marring them most seriously by piling-on canopies, pelmets, valances, and curtains, until the structures as a whole appeared to be so top-heavy that we should imagine the occupants must have experienced a feeling of great oppression, if not of impending collapse.

The mahogany pillars themselves were generally light and graceful in form and proportion, and were comparatively simple so far as enrichment was concerned; but the massive superstructures went to the other extreme, being overwhelming in appearance, and constituting perfectly ideal asylums for moth, dust, and other organisms.

The bedstead portrayed upon Plate I. partakes somewhat of the character indicated; a similar, though rather less elaborate, type is figured on Plate III. In the latter case the pillars are almost plain and without relief of any kind. The canopies and wooden heads, in both examples, I need hardly



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| Arm chair. | See 112 |
| Bookcase. | ,, 122 |
| Door tracery. | ,, 124 |
| Pedestal. | See 126 |
| Tea caddy. | ,, 126 |

point out at this stage of our study, remind us more than a little of the "Louis-Quatorze" and "Louis-Quinze" at their worst. They call for but passing notice, as enough has already been written upon that aspect of the style.

In the third example, which will be found on Plate X., we have a "Chippendale-Chinese" bedstead which is decidedly interesting, as models of its class are extremely rare. In this a combination of the Chinese pagoda top, lattice work, and applied frets appears: but they were not enough. The temptation to introduce the French element was too strong to be resisted, so the ever-ready coquillage crops up again in all manner of unexpected situations, forming a most curious *mélange*, though not an uncommon one in the style under consideration.

There is yet another most prominent and unmistakable feature of true "Chippendale" which we must not fail specially to note, as it occurs frequently in both chairs and tables. I refer to the square leg, pierced, and also the leg composed of three, or four, slender turned columns, or pillars, set slightly apart, and bound together by fine mouldings, at intervals more or less frequent according to the proportions of the leg. Examples of this class are presented on Plates V., VI., IX., and X.

So far we have analysed, as fully as space has permitted, and, indeed, as is essential to our purpose, those phases of "Chippendale"—and they are the most important of all—in which the originator borrowed from the French, Chinese, and Gothic; adapting freely, according to his own fancies, the ideas of others. Having arrived so far, we are rapidly nearing the end of this section of our subject; but another aspect still remains to be examined, and, although it may not prove to be by any means as interesting, from some points of view, as the rest, it must on no account be omitted.

Chippendale, like most people who depend upon the public favour for their livelihood, had, of course, to cater for

the requirements of the less-monied portion of the community as well as for those of the wealthier classes, and when considering the demands of both, it is hard to decide which were the more exacting, and which the easier, to satisfy. In much, perhaps in most, of his work, considerations of price altogether prohibited him from indulging in those fantastic extravagances which his admiration for the French, and his flirtation with the Chinese, led him to commit in his productions when cost was not a great object.

By way of concluding my review of his work, therefore, I shall deal briefly with what we may term, for the sake of convenience, "Inexpensive Chippendale"; and we shall see, when we examine it, that our "upholder" had amazingly little that was very fresh, or in any way striking, to offer his customers when he was forced by circumstances to fall back entirely upon his own originality. From the point of view of good taste, his least costly, and consequently plainest, furniture, strangely enough, must be regarded as by far his best. It is notably free from all extravagance and eccentricity, and is almost invariably characterised by excellence of proportion, and a refinement in such detail as there is, which are altogether charming and restful to the eye, and stand out in marked contrast with most of the creations already referred to on the preceding pages.

Some people may consider that in the foregoing paragraph, and perhaps in my remarks throughout this chapter, I have done this old master but scant justice. If such be the case, I am sorry, but I have endeavoured, to the best of my ability, to defend and justify the position I have taken up. Be that as it may; in support of my contention as to his plainer furniture, I cannot do better than point to the clothes-press or wardrobe in the lower group on Plate I., the two chests on Plate III., the simpler of the two tables on Plate VI., the bookcase on Plate VII., the two bookcases and secrétaire on Plate IX., the chest on Plate X., and the two

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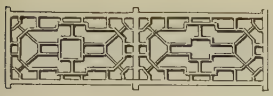
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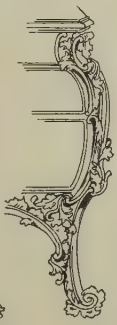
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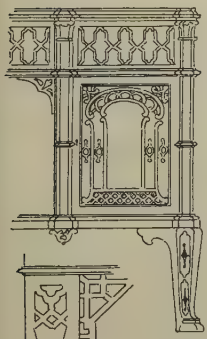
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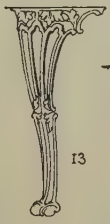
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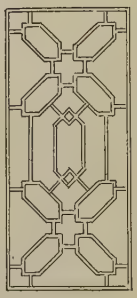
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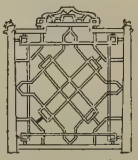
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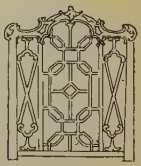
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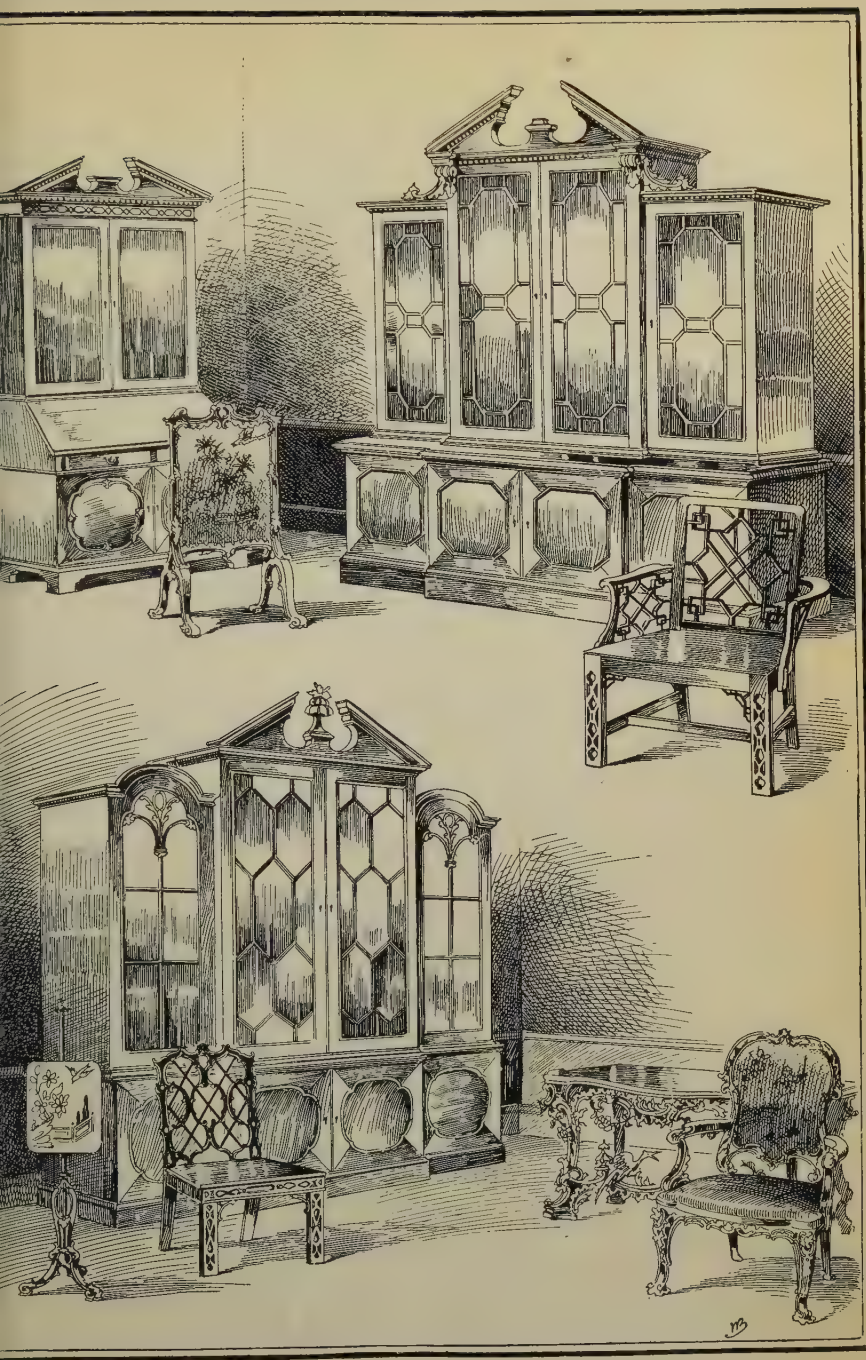
| Fig. 1. | See 118 | Fig. 4. | See 245 | Fig. 7. | See 118 | Fig. 15. | See 124 |
| ,, 2. | ,, 118 | ,, 5. | ,, 118 | ,, 12. | ,, 118 | ,, 16. | ,, 124 |

bookcases and writing-table on Plate XI. From these it will be seen that in "Chippendale" cabinet work of the more pretentious dimensions, such as wardrobes, bookcases, and the like, the "broken pediment" is frequently introduced; but I need hardly explain that Chippendale is not to be credited with the discovery of that feature, so that here again our master cannot lay claim to any degree of originality. But how vastly superior it is to anything really his own—the Pagoda-cum-"Louis-Quinze"-cum-Bouquet creations, for instance. This type of pediment, as everybody, of course, knows, was repeatedly employed by the interior architects of the days of Queen Anne, who took it direct from the revivalists of the Palladian school, who themselves obtained it from the original Italian source; so, in truth, it is as much "Chippendale" as Fijian! In calling to mind the frequency of its adoption by "Queen-Anne" architects, we cannot but be struck by the comparative infrequency of its use in the furniture of the period during which they pursued their labours, and it is natural to look for the reason of this. Its absence is probably due to the fact that the days of massive "carcase work" had not yet arrived. This explanation, at the first glance, may convey little or nothing to the mind of the reader, but a moment or two's consideration will make it clear. Except on fairly large structures, such as those I have named, the "broken pediment" nearly always looks somewhat out of place; it is a feature of purely architectural origin, and first saw the light as a culminating point in stately, and more or less massive, buildings, the proportions and associations of which are instinctively brought back to our memory by these wooden suggestions of one of their leading characteristics. Thus it is that on tiny cabinets, for example, it looks incongruous.

Chippendale, however, fully understood where it should and should not be introduced, and properly appreciated its value as a decorative termination or superstructure. As a consequence, he took generous advantage of its aid, sometimes

enriching it with small dentil mouldings (tiny square or oblong blocks of wood, arranged in succession a small distance apart from each other, underneath a square "member" of an ordinary moulding, and somewhat resembling a row of teeth—hence "dentil" moulding), and leading up to it by introducing a frieze of applied fret-work, as in the secrétaire on Plate IX. The centre of the pediment at the "break" was usually furnished with a broad moulding, or shelf, left plain for the reception of a bust or vase, either of which formed a capital finish. Occasionally it had some such lumpy and ugly excrescence as that on the lower bookcase on Plate IX.

Apart from this pediment, Chippendale's work of the class under consideration was peculiarly free from carving or other enrichment of any kind; and what little he did introduce was invariably of the most restrained and pleasing character. Referring again, for a moment, to this designer's cabinet work generally, a word may be said of the cupboard doors, both large and small. Where glass was introduced—and its employment was by this time becoming more general—it was usually "broken up" by tracery such as that shown in one of the lower cabinets, Plate VI., in the bookcases, Plates VII., IX., and XI., and in Figs. 15 and 16, Plate VIII., drawn to a larger scale. As much of this tracery will be encountered in bookcases and similar pieces of a later period it will be well for the reader, in order to avoid confusion, to note particularly that most examples designed by Chippendale were essentially angular in character, curves being very seldom and sparingly introduced. There are, however, a few notable exceptions, one of which is portrayed in Fig. 16, Plate VIII. When the doors were not panelled-in with glass, but were of wood throughout, the larger surfaces were often relieved by applied carving, as in the upper wardrobe, Plate I., the large press, Plate III., the two secrétaires, Plate V., and other pieces shown.



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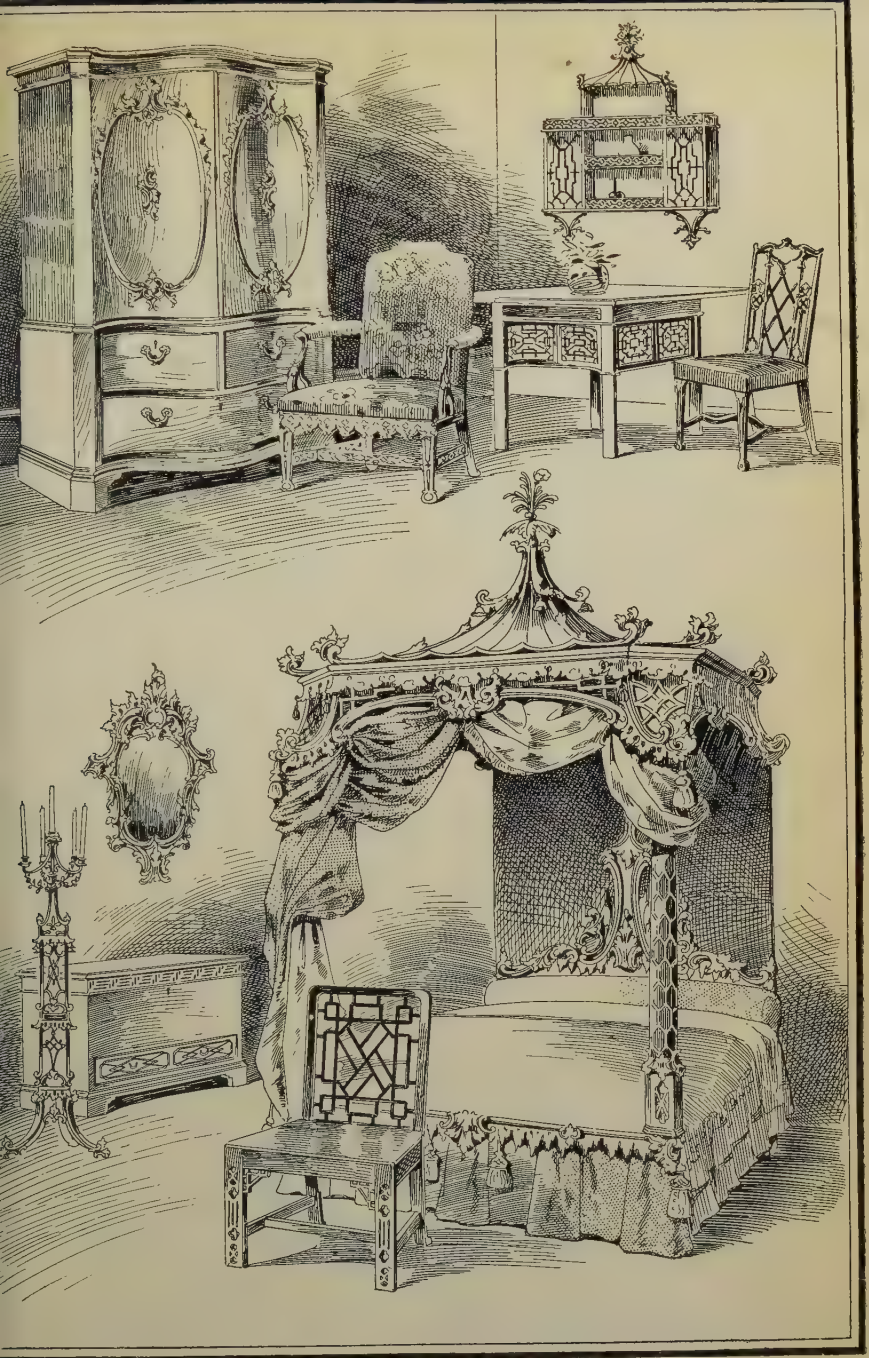
| | Page |
|---|---|
| Chairs. | See 105, 112, 115, 245 |
| Secretaire. | ,, 122, 124 |
| Bookcases. | ,, 122, 124 |
| Door tracery. | See 124 |
| Screen. | ,, 126 |
| Table. | ,, 245 |

Earlier in the chapter I have mentioned that Chippendale was among the first cabinet makers in this country to employ mahogany for the manufacture of furniture, and I do not think it necessary for me to occupy space here by repeating the oft-told tale of the introduction of that wood into England by Dr. Gibbon, in or about the year 1742, as it is to be found in almost any encyclopædia. So often indeed has it been repeated, in one form or another, that many people have come to believe that no furniture was ever made in mahogany prior to that date; such people are prepared to insist most emphatically that argument to the contrary reveals lamentable ignorance. With regard to that point perhaps I need only say that I myself have actually sat in old Dutch chairs, made in mahogany, of which ample documentary evidence exists to prove conclusively that they were used by Charles the Second during his enforced exile at the Hague. But to return to Chippendale.

At the period of which I am now writing the furnishing of the British home was becoming far more extensive and varied than in earlier times, and such necessary articles as bedsteads, chairs, tables, bookcases, drawers, cupboards, and presses of different kinds, were supplemented by other pieces which partook more of the nature of luxuries, and whose services at a pinch could be very well dispensed with without any serious inconvenience, though they certainly add to the comforts of life. All manner of dainty knick-knacks crept into the furnishing show-rooms—little wall-brackets and hanging cabinets for books and china; small "occasional" tables, girandoles, decorative pedestals, "Banner," "Shield," and "Horse" screens, tea caddies, and the like; and last, but by no means least, the "Grandfather's Clock." The field open to the designer and maker of cabinet work was thus vastly extended; as a natural consequence, the opportunities he enjoyed for the exercise and display of whatever taste and ingenuity in design and skill in craftsmanship he might

possess were far greater than those with which his predecessors had been forced to rest content. It is more than probable that Chippendale was responsible for the introduction of some of these novelties—for they were novelties then—and it is only proper, therefore, that a few of his designs for them should be included among our typical studies. Two clock-cases of the "Grandfather" type, and two smaller ones, for the table or mantelpiece, thoroughly characteristic as regards both form and detail, are shown on Plate II., together with an extravagant girandole on French lines, to which reference has previously been made. A neat and sensible little hanging bookcase or medicine cupboard appears on Plate III., and another of a similar type on Plate IV.; "Pole" and "Horse" screens on Plates IV. and IX.; a small wall-bracket and pedestals on Plates V., VII., and X.; two tea caddies on Plates VI. and VII., and other small pieces dotted about here and there on the remaining plates, may be taken as examples of the class of fancy furniture to which I refer. None of these requires lengthy description, as all are types in every particular of one or the other of the four distinct phases of "Chippendale" which have been exhaustively dealt with in the preceding pages.

It is one thing to examine articles of furniture individually and separately, and often quite another to see them grouped together in a room, with a proper decorative setting of wall hangings, carpet, window draperies, and other accessories, so as to form one harmonious and consistent whole. A completely adequate conception of their true and full merit, not as individual pieces but as actual "furnishings"—that is to say, adjuncts to something else, integral parts of a complete scheme—is to be gained only by having these household gods grouped together in a room for our inspection. Bearing this in mind, in the consideration of each style I have made a special point of illustrating complete interiors, thoroughly representative in every way of the



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| Chairs. | See 115 | Bedstead. | See 121 |
| Table. | ,, 115 | Chest. | ,, 122 |
| Wall bookshelves. | ,, 117 | Pedestal. | ,, 126 |

respective periods dealt with. To show, therefore, in some measure, how "Chippendale" really appeared in the home in the days of its prime, the window corner of a dining room, or morning room, true to style in every particular, is portrayed on Plate VII. Here, in the table by the window, we have a simple and dignified reading of the "Louis-Quatorze," together with a less faithful rendering of the same style in the somewhat unsafe-looking pedestal which supports the fern pot; the arm-chair is, of course, inspired by the "Louis-Quinze," and is a refined example; while the pelmet of the window drapery partakes of the same character, as do the "small" chairs also, but in a lesser degree. The bookcase and table are "Chippendale" pure and simple, hardly touched at all by French influence, and are, I think, none the worse for that.

Before leaving the consideration of the style, I must mention one other point which remains to be noticed in connection with it, and upon which emphasis must be laid. The importance of not turning to another branch of our study without referring to this may be indicated by the brief relation of an incident which came within my experience not so very many years ago. I spent an evening at one of a series of lectures on the history of furniture, arranged by a highly respected educational body specially for the benefit of young workers in the London cabinet making industries, and the lecturer, during the course of his remarks, gravely informed the students that it was his intention to deal with "'Chippendale' inlaid and painted furniture!" This lecturer, be it noted, was a man of no mean ability in other branches of art, enjoying a coveted reputation and one fairly won. He was not, however, "great" on the subject in which he had been appointed to instruct the rising generation. Yet, I fancy some one may enquire: "But why do you take exception to his statement which you have quoted?" I take exception simply because *Chippendale did not cultivate either inlay or*

*painting* in the enrichment of his productions, and in cases where it is found some other description must be sought.

It is more than a little curious that the opportunities for the attainment of richness of effect and variety of colour afforded by the decorative *media* mentioned should not have appealed to, and been freely used by, this designer, but it is absolutely certain that he cared for neither. Indeed, he left them severely alone. Nor is it really difficult to account for this attitude when we remember that Chippendale was, in the first place, trained as a carver. His father was a carver of picture frames, and it was natural, perhaps, that the son should remain a carver at heart to the very end. He was more than satisfied with the effects to be obtained by the skilled and vigorous plying of the chisel and gouge, though for economy's sake, it is true, he did call the fret to his aid. The lighter, more graceful—some might say more effeminate—results to be secured by the employment of the marquetry cutter's saw, and the palette and brush, he left to others to use as they might feel disposed. What excellent use they *did* make of them will be fully demonstrated in succeeding chapters.

It must be clearly and unmistakably understood, then, that whenever painted (that is to say, decorated with painted enrichment) or inlaid furniture is described as "Chippendale," no matter where or by whom, it is a million chances to one that the description is incorrect.

In conclusion, so far as "Chippendale" is concerned, to those who regard old furniture from the commercial as well as from the artistic point of view, the mention of a few prices paid for genuine old examples of the style during recent years may be of interest; though it is impossible to set up any fixed standard of market value.

At a country sale (conducted by Messrs. Robinson and Fisher, of London) at Bradfield Hall, near Reading, of the property of the Connop family, the following bids (as reported

in the *Times*) were made and accepted :—Two remarkably fine old "Chippendale" state elbow chairs, with open-work backs and exquisitely carved lions' heads terminating the arms, "cabriole legs," with lions' heads on the "knees," and a covering of fine old English silk needlework, were bought for 780 guineas by a dealer, who was said to have re-sold them shortly afterwards for 1000 guineas—a good day's work! A large "Chippendale" state easy chair, elaborately carved, and bearing the arms of the Barrington family, the seat, back, and elbows covered in old tapestry, realised 205 guineas. A similar chair, gilt, and upholstered in red velvet, was sold for 105 guineas. A set of six chairs, with mahogany frames, and finely carved open-work backs, decorated with scrolls and leaves, realised 93 guineas. At another sale, held at their own rooms, the same firm of auctioneers sold another set of six carved mahogany "Chippendale" chairs, with pierced backs and carved "cabriole legs," for £108. (The same set cost the owner by whose instructions they were "put-up," the magnificent sum of £6.)

Some very interesting and genuine old "Chippendale" furniture came to the hammer at the sale of the contents of Longstowe Hall, Cambridge, held under the conduct of Messrs. Grain, Moyes, & Wishey, of Cambridge; several arm-chairs realised, even in so remote a place, from £10 to 10 guineas a piece; and a mahogany bookcase, five feet nine inches long, with projecting centre, brought £30, by no means a high price. At the Egmont Sale, in London, of the furniture removed from Cowdray, Midhurst, Sussex, one set of three "Chippendale" chairs, covered in damask, sold for 23 guineas; another, consisting of six "small" chairs, the seats covered in figured leather, and two arm-chairs to match, together realised a total of just over £53.

At "Christie's," some time ago, two exceptionally fine "Chippendale" cabinets, seven feet high by four feet long, with carved mouldings and legs, and open gallery above,

each having three glazed doors, were sold for 230 guineas, while, at the same sale, twelve very ordinary torchères, fifty-five inches high, of mahogany and satinwood, in the form of tripod altars, and carved with festoons of drapery, acanthus foliage, and similar detail, brought 44 guineas. Finally, the sale of some of the property of the late Mr. John Hargreaves, of Maiden Erleigh, near Reading (held by Messrs. Walton and Lee, of London) comprised a quantity of choice "Chippendale," including a six feet carved mahogany table, with marble top (faulty), which sold for £28, and a mahogany cabinet, four feet wide, with glazed front and sides, and quaintly designed open top for china, which sold for £128. At the same sale, one of the greatest bargains of late years was secured in a beautifully carved "Chippendale" suite from the ball-room, upholstered in tapestry of a Persian pattern, which comprised six "small" chairs, a pair of arm-chairs, and a settee, five feet six inches long, and was knocked down for £50. Four comparatively commonplace carved mahogany chairs fetched £7.

It will be remarked from the foregoing that prices vary vastly according to the locality in which sales are held, the class of buyers present, and more particularly the absence or presence of sharp dealers. At many a country auction, attended only by villagers, I have seen fine old pieces "go" for a few shillings, which, had they been sent to "Christie's," or had one or two London dealers been present, would have been sold at very high prices.

# "HEPPELWHITE"

To pass from the study of "Chippendale" to that of the work of Heppelwhite, or, to speak more precisely, of Messrs. A. Heppelwhite & Co., is to be brought face to face with one of the greatest and most remarkable changes which ever occurred in the development of British furniture, and that occurred too in a comparatively brief space of time.

While the former style predominated, notwithstanding that it was in every respect much lighter, and perhaps on the whole more graceful, than its predecessors of the seventeenth century—except, of course, the "Queen-Anne"—the English cabinet maker was unable to shake himself free from the bondage of that sturdy heaviness—typical, some would have it, of our national temperament—by which his efforts had for so long been constricted. In those days the furnishing of the home seems to have been regarded as a most serious, if not solemn, undertaking, typifying the wealth and dignity of the household, and anything approaching flippancy was rigidly excluded from it.

One of the most gifted of modern humorists, and one whose death was indeed an event to be lamented—I refer to the genial Mr. Corney Grain—in his advice to "those about to furnish," pointed out that:—

> "Of course, you must buy old 'Chippendale,'
> So spindle-shanked, and slender, and frail,
> That every time you sit down in a chair
> Your legs go wandering up in the air,"

but that prince of kindly satirists laboured under a misapprehension. Applied to some of the work of Heppelwhite and Sheraton those words would be more applicable. As

my readers are by this time fully aware, when applied to "Chippendale" they miss their mark altogether.

There can, of course, be but little doubt that when filled with a gay throng habited in the dainty and multi-coloured, sometimes even gorgeous, dresses of the period, the old "Chippendale" interiors must have appeared brilliant indeed. The dark glowing tones of the choice Spanish mahogany would set off to perfection, by force of contrast, the rare and costly "confections" of the day; but it *was* just that contrast which was requisite to render the schemes complete. With the dresses taken away, and the woodwork left absolutely dependent upon its own intrinsic merits, those schemes were painfully wanting both in colour-value and variety of effect. That they were not altogether devoid of attractiveness—nay, that they even possessed a peculiar charm of their own—is, I need hardly say, altogether indisputable; but it was a charm which, to borrow a simile from music, was akin rather to the solemn fascination of one of Beethoven's more majestic creations than to that of the rippling lilt of Mozart or Bishop.

In the wake of that progress in the cultivation of the refinements of life which characterised the eighteenth century, and more particularly the latter part of it, a change rapidly came over the furnishing and adornment of the interior of the homes of our forefathers. So extensive was this change, indeed, that ere long it seemed almost as if some necromancer had removed a spell from their portals, and changed sadness into rejoicing! It was as if the spirit of merriment had taken the place of that of magnificence, and the reign of brightness and dainty refinement had bid dull care begone, and we must now consider the work of some of the men who were mainly instrumental in bringing this change about.

The names of Chippendale, Heppelwhite, and Sheraton, stand out so prominently from among those of their contemporaries in the history of the cabinet making and designing of the period during which they worked that we have become

accustomed to associate them with one another, and regard them almost as an inseparable triad of old masters, working together with but one idea, or set of ideas, and in perfect harmony. As has already been noted in the preceding chapter, some writers even go so far as to throw the mantle of the first over the other two, as well as over a great many lesser lights, a proceeding to which I am quite sure Chippendale himself, vain as he was, would never have consented. Against such a course I have already entered a strong, if not indignant, protest; deeming it necessary owing to the fact that the practice is steadily growing, under the encouragement and through the example of many who *ought* to know better but do not. Everything possible, therefore, should be done towards the correction of this error, and to prevent its perpetuation.

The life-work of each of the three designers named must be studied and judged upon its own merits, and not confused with those of others; nor is there really the least reason why this should not be done, for we shall find each fully capable of standing alone. Adopting this principle, and with the attainment of a specific object in view, I have planned the three chapters devoted to the work of these designers in such a way that they shall be exhaustively comparative as well as analytical, in order to demonstrate conclusively, once and for all, that to class the whole of our late eighteenth-century furniture under the all-embracing description "Chippendale" is as absurd and unjust as it is inaccurate.

Between the designs of Thomas Chippendale, then, and those of Heppelwhite a vast difference is to be noted; a difference so vast, indeed, that for one possessing even but a most elementary knowledge of the principal characteristics of the two styles to confuse them in any way is practically out of the question; that such a thing should ever be done is only to be accounted for in one way.

We have seen, in my last chapter, how, during the course of his operations, Chippendale borrowed from, and not infre-

quently perpetrated most outrageous caricatures of, the "Louis-Quatorze" and "Louis-Quinze"; and we shall presently discover the extent to which Sheraton—the last, but by no means the least, of the great three—followed in his footsteps, that is to say so far as appropriating French ideas was concerned, though he selected different ones and made far better and more intelligent use of them than did Chippendale.

It is, however, the style which came between the two that now demands our attention, and it is not in any respect one which can be dismissed with brief comment. On the contrary, it is entitled to a respect equal to, if not greater than, that accorded to "Chippendale" itself, though it is generally set aside by most writers with but scant courtesy.

To retrace our steps momentarily a number of years; the reader may be reminded that comparative lightness and grace commenced to make themselves felt in the designs of our household gods with the advent of the "Queen-Anne," and appeared in a still greater measure when Chippendale seriously turned his attention to their reformation; but it was lightness only when judged in comparison with the proportions of most of the furniture of the old Elizabethan and Stuart times.

It is in "Heppelwhite" really that we find the first actual attainment of that true, and altogether exceptional, delicacy and refinement which constituted the peculiar charm of the adornments of the home designed and produced in this country during the late Georgeian period, and in the earlier years of the last century.

It will doubtless be remembered that Chippendale's epoch-making book, "The Gentleman's and Cabinet Maker's Director," appeared in the year 1754, when George the Second was still on the throne of England. "The Cabinet Maker and Upholsterer's Guide, or Repository of Designs for every Article of Household Furniture in the Newest and most Approved Taste," by Messrs. A. Heppelwhite & Co., did not see the light until

thirty-five years later, when George the Third had reigned nearly thirty years, and when that awful storm was brewing in France which burst with such terrific violence only four years later.

When the brevity of this lapse of time is borne in mind, we cannot but experience a feeling of astonishment at the extent of the difference which distinguishes the respective designs illustrated in the two works named. The latter firm, it is true, to a certain degree, followed the lead of their great forerunner in respect of borrowing from across the Channel (I have noted that Sheraton did the same); but, on the one hand, they seldom descended to mere slavish copying; while, on the other, they endowed their creations with a far greater measure of originality than did any of their contemporaries, not excepting even the rarely gifted Sheraton himself.

In their preface to "The Cabinet Maker and Upholsterer's Guide," Messrs. Heppelwhite & Co. proffer the following "apology" for the publication of their ideas: "To unite elegance and utility, and blend the useful with the agreeable, has ever been considered a difficult, but an honourable, task. How far we have succeeded in the following work it becomes us not to say, but rather to leave it, with all due deference, to the determination of the public at large."

The task attempted was, truly, in no respect an easy one to accomplish successfully, but they went bravely and conscientiously to work, and with rare spirit and no small spice of genius to aid them in their endeavours. In the end, the verdict of the "public at large" was an extremely favourable one, and has continually been verified and confirmed during the course of nearly a century-and-a-half; nor could it by any possibility have been otherwise.

The grandiloquent introductions with which nearly all these old-fashioned design books are prefaced furnish most amusing reading nowadays; for it appears to have been the recognised custom, from the observance of which few

ever dreamed of departing, for each new authority, or *soi-disant* authority, to "run-down," with all his might, the efforts of his predecessors and contemporaries, and, so far as lay within his power, cover them with ridicule, no matter how successful they may have proved nor how great their popularity.

In the introduction of the particular work with which we are at present occupied, for instance, we find it gravely set forth that: "The mutability of all things, but more especially of fashions, has rendered the labours of our predecessors in this line of little use; nay, at this day, they can only tend to mislead those foreigners who seek a knowledge of English taste in the various articles of household furniture." That was sweeping enough, indeed. Poor old Chippendale! Still, he has been avenged, and time has proved the futility of that wholesale condemnation couched in so superior a tone.

We must judge these men by their works and not their words; and we must recognise to the full that Messrs. Heppelwhite & Co. undoubtedly did succeed in a remarkable degree in blending "elegance and utility." How they contrived to accomplish that task will become apparent upon a careful examination of the plates accompanying these notes, in conjunction with such explanatory remarks as I may be able to offer. And it may be as well here to emphasise the fact that the examples reproduced are, in every instance, absolutely authentic, having been taken direct from "The Cabinet Maker and Upholsterer's Guide" itself; from which source they have been selected with the most scrupulous care, in order that they may convey an absolutely complete idea of the style which they represent.

At the outset I may say that, though Messrs. Heppelwhite worked during the earlier years of their career almost contemporaneously with Chippendale, whose days were then rapidly drawing to a close, the style or styles founded by

the old "upholder" of Saint Martin's Lane seem to have possessed little or no charm in their eyes; they appropriated but very slightly from them—a really remarkable fact, considering all things. As I have before insisted, it is a very simple matter, therefore, to distinguish between the respective styles. While, as we have seen, the earlier designer drew so largely for inspiration from the "Louis-Quatorze" and the "Louis-Quinze" (as Sheraton did from the "Louis-Seize"), Heppelwhite struck upon the "happy medium"; and, though indebted in some degree to all those modes for ideas, he sedulously refrained from following too closely upon the exact lines of any one of them.

We have accepted it as a rule that, so far as the identification of style is concerned, the chairs of the eighteenth century are imbued with stronger and, therefore, more distinctive characteristics than other articles of household furniture of that period, consequently upon them we are able to utter a definite pronouncement with the greatest ease, and, at the same time, with the greatest degree of certainty.

To the chairs, then, we shall turn first. When we have to deal with cabinet work, on the other hand, we shall find that the variations are most numerous, and far more subtle, and consequently more difficult to distinguish, depending as they do, for the most part, on slight differences in more or less minute ornamental detail rather than on form. However, that phase of our subject we shall discuss in its place.

The designs of Heppelwhite, it must be admitted, resembled those of Chippendale, and differed from those of Sheraton, insomuch that, in his chairs, or, to speak with greater exactitude, in his chair-backs, he almost invariably avoided the straight line entirely, persistently excluding it from his schemes. But, though he did this, he never, under any circumstances, went the lengths to which his predecessor was led by his ever-present desire to be constantly producing "something fresh," and, moreover, "something French." It

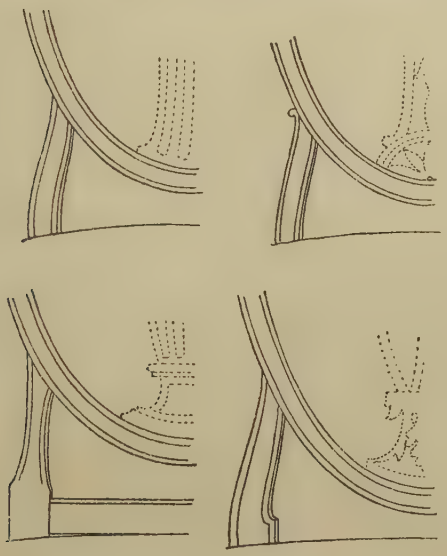
must not be inferred from this that Heppelwhite was one whit behind Chippendale in his desire to attain novelty; the very reverse was the case: but he seldom sacrificed good taste to secure it. Though he favoured the curvilinear so strongly, this designer, as will presently be seen, always kept his fancy well within legitimate bounds, and very rarely indulged in what might reasonably be termed extravagance. In all his work he gives evidence of the possession, in a high degree, of a love of daintiness and refinement, combined with a strict regard for constructional conditions; and I am very greatly inclined to the opinion that, in his eyes, such creations as the "Ribbon-Back," for example, ranked as positive abominations, and much of the quasi-Chinese cabinet work as not very much better.

It may be accepted as another rule, and one to which there are very few exceptions, that really pure and truly characteristic "Heppelwhite" chairs always have the "shield-shape" back, numerous types of which are shown on Plates I. and II. In studying these examples it must be specially noted that the curve at the top of the back is *invariably unbroken;* that is to say, it forms one graceful, sinuous sweep from one extremity to the other. I desire most particularly to emphasise this characteristic of the "Heppelwhite" back, because Sheraton occasionally adopted a form similar to the "shield shape," but, so far as I have been able to discover, he always interrupted, or "broke"—as it is technically termed—the top curve by a straight line, or rectangular panel, in the centre. Reference to Figs. 6 and 15, Plate II., in the following chapter will make this essential difference perfectly clear. Furthermore, in the two styles the junction of the back legs with the lower part of the sides of the shield differs in the manner indicated by the annexed sketch. This, it is true, is a minor detail, but in questions of identification minor details often go for much, and give, so to speak, the casting vote. It will be observed that Heppelwhite, more often than not

"finishes off" the join by introducing a tiny scroll-head, sometimes with a rosette carved upon it, and sometimes quite plain; but this feature is never to be found in genuine "Sheraton."

It is not a little difficult to distinguish between many of the productions of these two designers, for the simple reason

"Heppelwhite" support of "Shield-Back"



"Sheraton" support of "Shield-Back"

(*See page* 138 *for reference*)

that, in the first place, they both went to the same sources for inspiration, and, in the second, freely appropriated one another's ideas whenever they felt so disposed, or occasion demanded. On that account, if on no other, the minor distinctive features should be kept constantly in view, as a thorough acquaintance with them clears from the connois-

seur's and collector's path many obstacles that would otherwise render the formation of a correct judgment extremely difficult.

There is also more freedom, a greater "flow," if I may so describe it, and consequently more grace, about the chair backs as a whole of Heppelwhite than in those of Sheraton, whose determined, and almost unrelenting, cultivation of the straight line in preference to the curvilinear may perhaps reasonably be ascribed to the presence, in his mind, of a desire to escape, so far as it was avoidable, the charge of copying the lines originated by his popular contemporary.

Eight "shield-shape" chair backs, and one oval in form, are illustrated on Plate II., giving as complete an idea of Heppelwhite's preferences in this direction as can possibly be conveyed. To illustrate my assertion that these competitors for public favour—and, what was more important, patronage—did not by any means object occasionally to copy from one another's works, Figs. 8, 10, and 11 on the same plate, and Fig. 2 on the preceding one, are given. These examples were included in Heppelwhite's book, though they are not at all in his style. They were most probably included in order to indicate that the firm responsible for the publication of the work were quite able to satisfy the public demand for types created by Sheraton, as well as those on their own lines; for notwithstanding the fact that they are taken direct from "The Cabinet Maker and Upholsterer's Guide," they are in all respects foreign to the style whose principles are enunciated in its pages. In regard to such cases as this, perhaps it would be better to coin some such description as "Heppelwhite-cum-Sheraton," though it would be fairer and far more correct to describe them as "Sheraton" pure and simple, for it is evident that they partake far more of the latter style than of the former.

The overwhelming majority of "Heppelwhite" backs are open; that is to say, composed solely of wood, shaped and

jointed, or cut-through; for upholstery in them does not seem to have commended itself to this designer to any very great extent, as he introduced it but very rarely. When he did make use of this comfortable addition, it was usually on the lines indicated by Fig. 9, Plate II. In order to convey a still more adequate conception of the true characteristics of the "Heppelwhite" chair, various forms of arms which constantly recur are given in Figs. 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, and 18 on the same plate. The essential difference between these and the typical "Sheraton" arm can be discovered at once by comparing these forms with those illustrated on Plates I., II., and III. in my chapter on "Sheraton." The arms proper in the latter style are nearly always shaped in a graceful curve, or series of curves, "springing" from the back; *but they are supported in front, where they terminate, by upright, turned pillars*, which are really continuations of the front legs, the design of which is carried up into them.

The "Heppelwhite" arm, though apparently very similar to the "Sheraton" to the casual observer, is, in reality, altogether different. It resembles the "Sheraton" insomuch that it usually comes down from the back in a single curve, more or less pronounced; but, instead of being supported in front by the turned "upright," another curve, nearly always concave, but sometimes serpentine, carries it down to the top of the front legs, where they join the seat-frame. That this rule is not absolutely invariable will be seen by reference to Fig. 15, Plate II., and Fig. 9, Plate III. in "Sheraton," but those two examples may be regarded as exceptions. The shaping of the "Heppelwhite" arm is sometimes extremely subtle and, I think, charming, as, for instance, in Figs. 17 and 18, Plate II. Small upholstered pads were frequently introduced in both styles.

"Heppelwhite" chair legs are, in most cases, square; and, in chairs of the less expensive class, perfectly plain, or with just a single "reed" at the corners. In chairs of the better

and more costly description, however, intended for the drawing-room, boudoir, and apartments of importance, we find such legs as those portrayed in Figs. 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 26, and 28, Plate II. The turned legs, Figs. 25 and 27, furnish still further evidence that this designer was not averse to following on "Sheraton" lines; indeed the second of the two is, to all intents and purposes, pure "Louis-Seize," such as delighted the heart of Sheraton. Legs of the type shown in Figs. 20 and 21—that is to say, curving gracefully outwards at the tapered toe—are not often to be met with at the period of which I am writing. This is rather surprising, for these are without question extremely graceful, and greatly enhance the beauty of the chairs in which they are found. Lastly, so far as "Heppelwhite" legs are concerned, the "cabriole" was sometimes introduced by this designer, but only in those patterns the design of which was avowedly after French models, and they are not at all common in this style.

Regarding the general dimensions of these chairs, the measurements specified by the designer himself are as follows: "Width in front, 20 inches; depth of seat (from back to front), 17 inches; height of seat-frame, 17 inches; total height about 3 feet 1 inch." They are, with very few exceptions, made in mahogany, either carved, painted, or inlaid; with seats and other upholstered parts covered in horsehair, plain, striped, chequered, or in other patterns; or with cane "bottoms," on which were placed loose cushions, the "cases" of which were covered with the same fabrics as those employed for the curtains of the room in which the chairs were destined to find a place. Sometimes red or blue morocco was employed for the covering, most frequently where both back and seat were upholstered; medallions of printed, or painted, silk were inserted not infrequently into the back. When the backs and seats were of leather they were often tied down by means of tassels of silk or thread.

The examples illustrated on Plate III. are, almost without

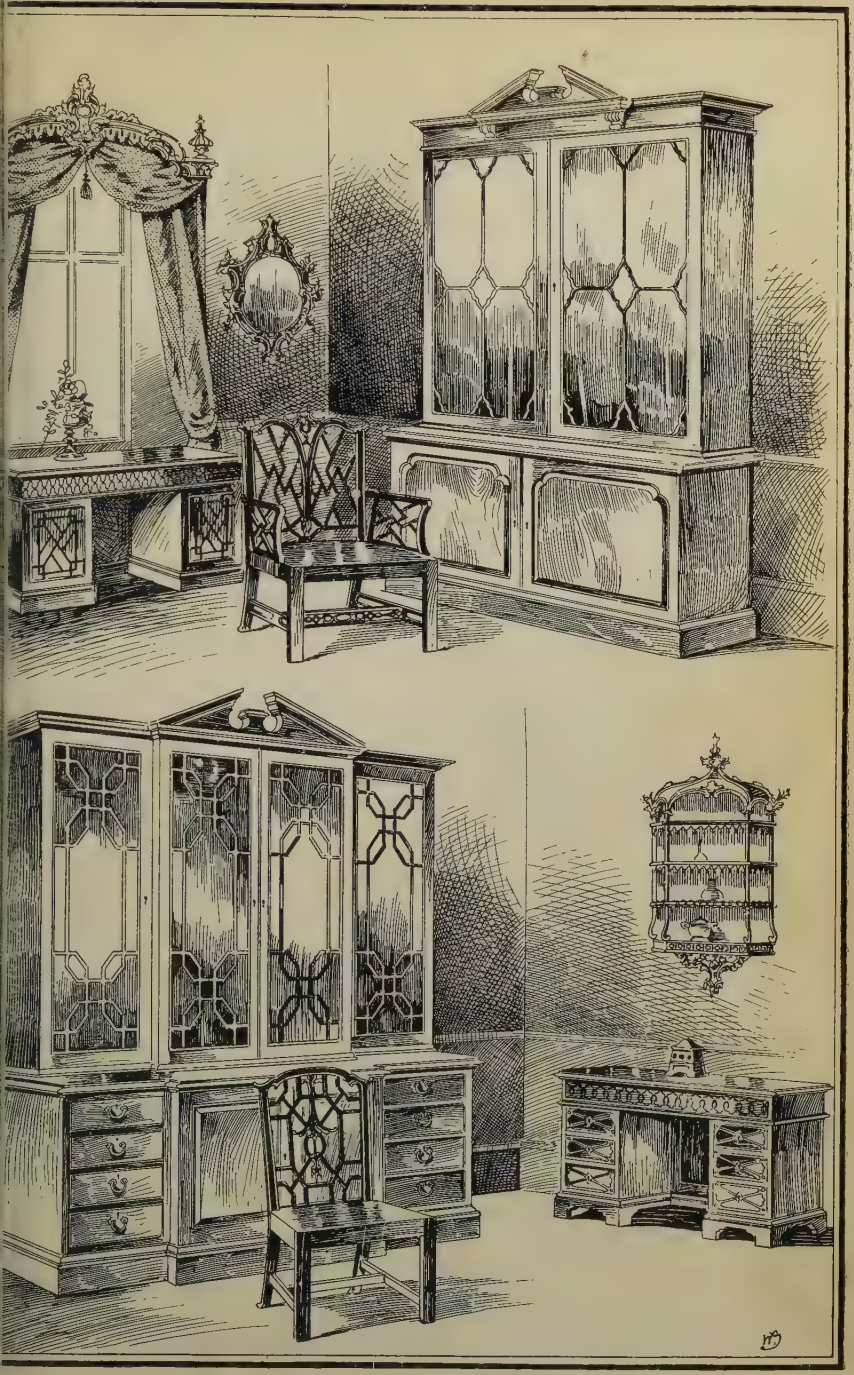
exception, designed for the furnishing of the drawing-room, and exemplify, as completely as we could desire, the extreme delicacy and daintiness of "Heppelwhite." They stand out in marked contrast to the comparative heaviness—by "heaviness" I do not necessarily mean clumsiness—which, as we have seen, characterised the majority of Chippendale's productions. On this plate we have a selection of tables of different kinds, and for various purposes—for the enjoyment of light refreshment, writing, card-playing, etc.,—which indicate how that particular piece of furniture, together with many another, was undergoing numerous transformations at the hands of the late eighteenth-century designer and cabinet maker. Fig. 2 is an example of the "Heppelwhite" card-table of the simpler type; Fig. 3 is one of a series of inlaid or painted "Pembroke" tables, which, says Heppelwhite, "are the most useful of this species of furniture;" Fig. 4 is another "Pembroke," with a rectangular, instead of a circular, top; and Figs. 6, 8, and 10 are pier-tables, which, remarks the designer, "are become an article of much fashion; and not being applied to such general use as other tables, admit, with great propriety, of much elegance and ornament. . . . The height . . . varies from the general rule"—28 inches—"as they are now universally made to fit the pier, and rise level with, or above the dado of the room, nearly touching the ornaments of the glass."

These, together with the tops for tables and sideboards shown in Figs. 16, 17, 18, 19, and 20, will convey some impression as to how far Heppelwhite was prepared to indulge in carved, painted, japanned, and inlaid enrichment, and will give a good idea of the rare skill with which he originated schemes of decoration for rendering by those *media*. As a matter of fact, in addition to the services of the most able carvers and marquetry cutters, the aid of painters of the highest repute, notably Angelica Kauffmann, Cipriani, and Pergolesi, was called in at this period to embellish,

by means of the brush, furniture designed for the homes of the wealthier class of patrons; but with their labours in this direction I shall deal in another chapter.

The "pole" fire-screen, now but rarely seen, was just becoming popular at this period, and two examples of Heppelwhite's treatment of it are given in Figs. 1 and 5, Plate III. Screens of this type, says this designer, "may be ornamented variously with maps, Chinese figures, needlework, etc.," and, with regard to their construction, he continues: "The screen is suspended on the pole by means of a spring in the eye through which the pole goes." (We shall see in the next chapter how Sheraton, with his love for mechanics, improved upon this arrangement; as he did upon many of a similar nature.) "The feet of the screen are loaded with lead to secure immunity from sudden upsets."

The wood employed in their manufacture was often mahogany, but generally they were of some softer and less expensive wood, japanned. The "horse" screen, of the type shown in Fig. 11, was also a common accompaniment of the cosy fireside; the framework was invariably of mahogany, the panels being filled with rich silk, needlework, and the like. As to the working of the "horse" screen, the centre part slid in grooves made in the inner sides of the supporting uprights, being suspended by weights attached to it by a line which passed over a pulley in the top of the frame. Figs. 7 and 9 are candle-stands, which, according to this authority, "are very useful in large suites of apartments, as the light may be placed in any part at pleasure—in drawing-rooms, in halls; and on larger staircases. . . ." Their place, I need hardly point out, has now been taken by the metal, telescopic, standard floor lamp, with its tortuosities, spirals, leafage, and rosettes in wrought iron, brass, and copper. The modern article, it must be admitted, serves the purposes for which it is intended satisfactorily enough, and is not infrequently an attractive demonstration



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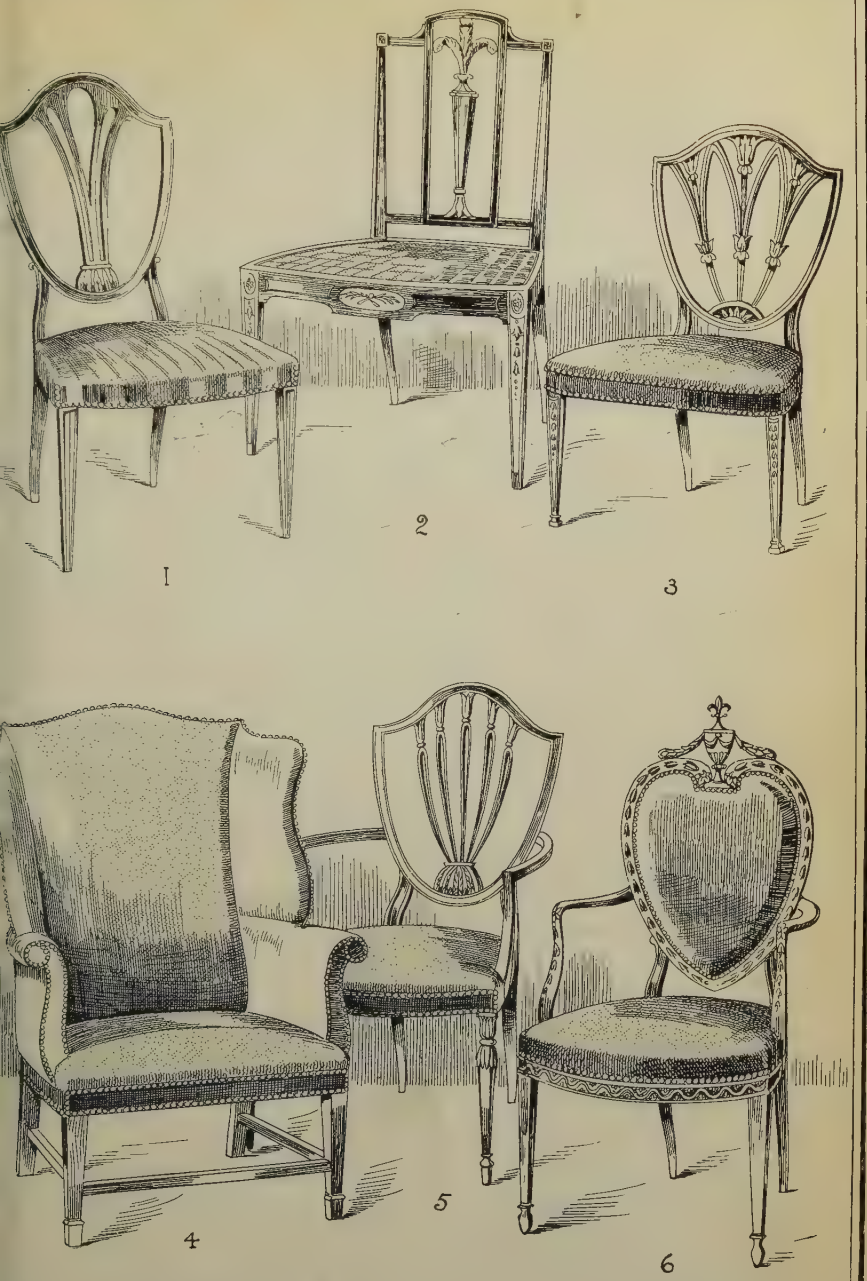


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of the metal-workers' skill; but, at the best, it is not, in my opinion, so truly decorative nor "home-like" as its wooden ancestor of Heppelwhite's days. But that is a matter of taste, so I need say no more upon the subject. I may, however, remind the reader that it is not uncommon nowadays to find the pillars of old "four-posters" cut-down to serve the purpose at present in view, and admirably they serve it.

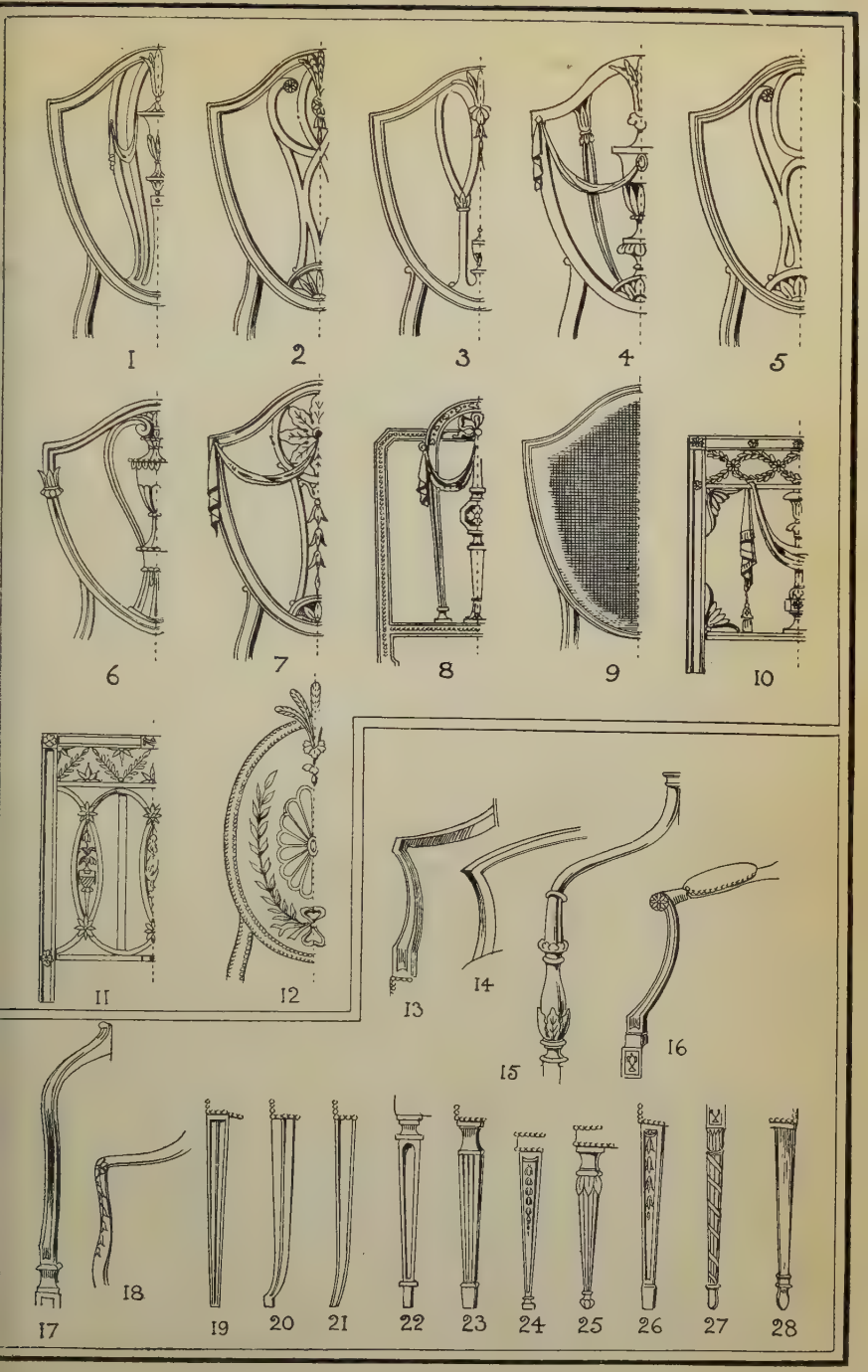
Typical tea caddies, inlaid and painted, are represented in Figs. 14 and 15, and two urn stands in Figs. 12 and 13. Each of the two last has in the top a small slide running in a groove to receive it, and made to draw out in order to furnish a convenient and secure resting-place for the teapot, and, if occasion requires, one or two cups.

Many smaller articles of furniture which were treasured in most English homes in days gone by have disappeared one by one in the course of years, either because the conditions of our daily life have changed and rendered their presence unnecessary, or because they have been supplanted by more modern, and presumably superior, innovations. The disappearance of some is much to be regretted, and none more than that of the old wooden tea caddy of our grandmothers' days. What a pity we no longer have *that* with us: but the call for it has gone. The all-essential ingredient of "the cup that cheers," far from being regarded as a luxury, as it was not so very many years ago, is nowadays looked upon by poor and rich alike almost in the light of an actual necessary of life. Those who cannot afford a good "leaf" will expend a considerable percentage of their modest incomes on "sweepings" rather than be deprived altogether of their cup of tea. The younger generation, which has always been accustomed to this state of things, knows little of the jealous care with which every leaf and grain of the precious "Pekoe" or "Soochong" was guarded a century ago by the careful housewife, who would have shuddered

at the bare idea of any particle being relegated to the care of anyone but herself or the most trusted lieutenant. To keep the tea in the kitchen would have been regarded as a sacrilege, and such an idea was never entertained. On the contrary, it was accorded a place of honour, under lock and key be it noted, in the dining-room, its resting-place generally being the chief position on the top of the side-board, an article with regard to which I shall have some-thing to say presently.

As we are all aware, the Dutch did not initiate us into the mysteries of tea-making and drinking until the year 1660, and it was not until fully thirty years later that the fragrant beverage became in any way common. For a long period, indeed, its enjoyment was restricted to the few by reason of expense ; and even in the days of Heppelwhite it was a costly article. Under these circumstances it was essential to provide a proper receptacle, a worthy "setting," so to speak, for this treasure; hence arose the gracefully shaped and tastefully decorated tea caddy of mahogany and satinwood, painted, and inlaid with all manner of rare veneers.

Considerable attention was devoted to their design. The earlier caddies were often of soft wood, lacquered in black and gold, and not infrequently covered with the most elaborate diapers and "powdering" ; but those with which we are now concerned were, as I have indicated, generally made either of mahogany, inlaid with satinwood or canary-wood and other coloured marquetry, or of satinwood itself, delicately painted or inlaid, after the manner indicated by the illustrations to which I have referred. In addition to serving faithfully a most im-portant utilitarian purpose, they were, in themselves, oftentimes actually things of beauty ; and, in conjunction with the knife-cases by which they were usually "supported" on either side, went far to enhance the general effect of the old sideboards whereon they were placed, and of which they seemed to constitute an essential feature. But they have gone, I suppose

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never to return, for has not a less expensive substitute for them been found? We now have the cheap, enamelled, tin receptacles, which, no one can deny, serve their purpose sufficiently well; but it is certain that they will never give pleasure to the eye. All, therefore, who are so fortunate as to possess caddies of the good old-fashioned sort should treasure them carefully. They are becoming more difficult to secure every day, and those who desire to include fine examples in their collections will do well to "snap at" any that may come their way—provided, of course, that they are worth having.

Before leaving the consideration of this Plate (III.), I may point out that the very fact of the appearance of so many pieces of what may be described as fancy furniture in a single design book of the period in question is sufficient evidence that the reign of elegance had seriously commenced, and that utility, though by no means forgotten, was no longer regarded as the only and all-important quality to be secured. The demands of the graces of life were increasing.

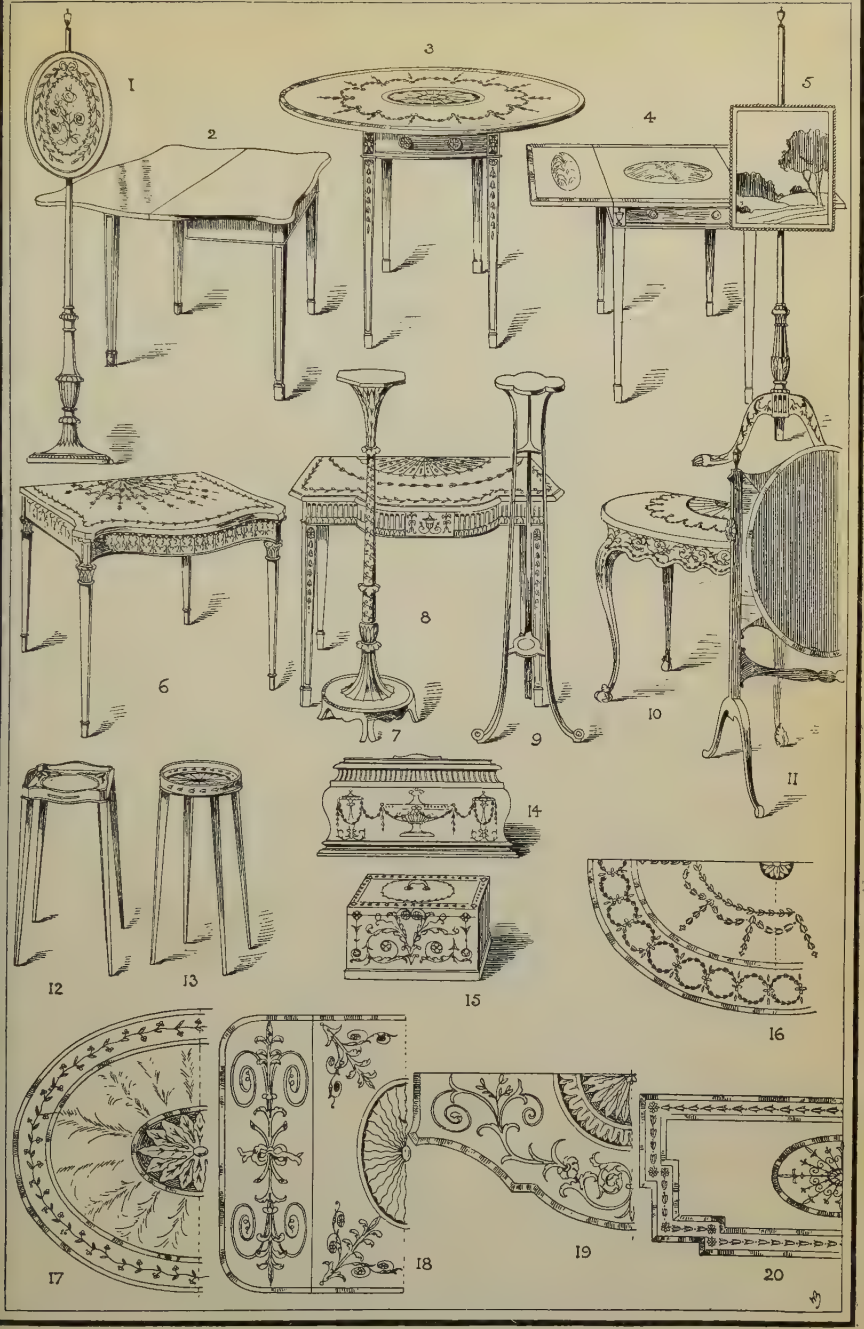
We will turn now to the consideration of more pretentious productions, technically known to the cabinet maker as "carcase work." Plate IV. is devoted to a variety of appointments for the library and study, apartments which, whether they were seriously used for their proper purposes or not, were made much of in those days when it was fashionable to ape a knowledge of literature, and when the slightest pretensions to its cultivation were often sufficient to insure an *entrée* into the most exclusive social circles; provided, of course, that they were put forward with sufficient assurance. The penning of *billets-doux*, sonnets, and love-sick verses, of every length and metre, with fulsome adulation of "my lady's eyes," or wails of hopeless despair at her unrelenting coldness, were the order of the day; and the reputation of a man who aspired to write an epic poem on the one hand, or a play on the other, was assured, even though it may never have been destined to see the light. Simply to have your name on the list of subscribers

for any projected *magnum opus* was to attain notoriety. Can we then be surprised if every home that boasted a room to spare devoted it presumably to the pursuit of literary studies?

So far as it lay within their power the cabinet makers, of course, were ready and willing to encourage and foster the existence of this state of things; for it suited them admirably. In order to do so, and help at the same time to fill their order books, they devised all manner of articles designed to enhance the convenience and comfort of reading and writing, and for the reception of books and the storage of papers. Many of these were the direct ancestors of some of the most indispensable furnishing adjuncts of the well-appointed library and study of to-day.

The articles represented in Figs. 1, 3, and 4, Plate IV., variously termed "secretary bookcases," "bureau bookcases," "escritoires," and "secrétaires," represent a type the manufacture of which was extensively cultivated. Similar ones were, as we have seen, well known at a much earlier date, and their lasting popularity is not one whit to be wondered at, for now, as then, they are a veritable "boon and blessing" to the literarily inclined, who desire to have their necessary books of reference and favourite authors handy, and their papers safe from the terrors of "tidying" operations, and the soul-stirring, as well as dust-stirring, ravages wrought by the ubiquitous duster.

Secrétaires almost precisely similar in character to those under consideration are still manufactured in very large numbers, but they have found a remarkably strong rival in the modern American "roll-top" desk; an article which, during the past fifteen or twenty years, has been imported into this country by tens of thousands. Against this importation, regarded strictly from the utilitarian point of view, I have not a single word to say. The "roll-top" desk, indeed, provided it be by one of the reputable manufacturers, is in every respect an ideal one for the busy man who can dispense

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with art in commercial affairs; but, regarded from the purely artistic point of view, it is, to put it mildly, unattractive in every sense of the word. Though tolerated, nay, even heartily welcome in the office, where we do not usually expect to find beauty—though why we should not I am unable to say—its presence in any well-furnished library, study, or "den" jars very considerably upon the sensibilities, and makes us long sincerely for the substitution of some such "secretary bookcase" as those which these cabinet makers of the old times revelled in designing.

Figure 5 is a bookcase, or "library-case" as they were styled in those days. Like nearly all other cabinet work of this period, these were made in mahogany, but a variation was occasionally introduced in the tracery of the doors. This was usually of the same wood as that of the main body, or "carcase," of the article, though occasionally, as in Fig. 5, it was carried out in metal—preferably brass—"which," says Heppelwhite, "painted of a light colour, or gilt, will produce a light, pleasing effect." In "library-cases" of this precise type, it appears, at a first glance, as though no accommodation for writing was to be looked for in the scheme; and any one might easily, and quite naturally, put them down as bookcases pure and simple. But on pulling out the centre drawer, or "secretary-drawer" as it was termed, ample writing surface, pigeon-holes, ink-wells, small drawers, and all manner of other conveniences were revealed; while beneath were shelves and larger drawers of more than average dimensions for portfolios, papers, books, etc.

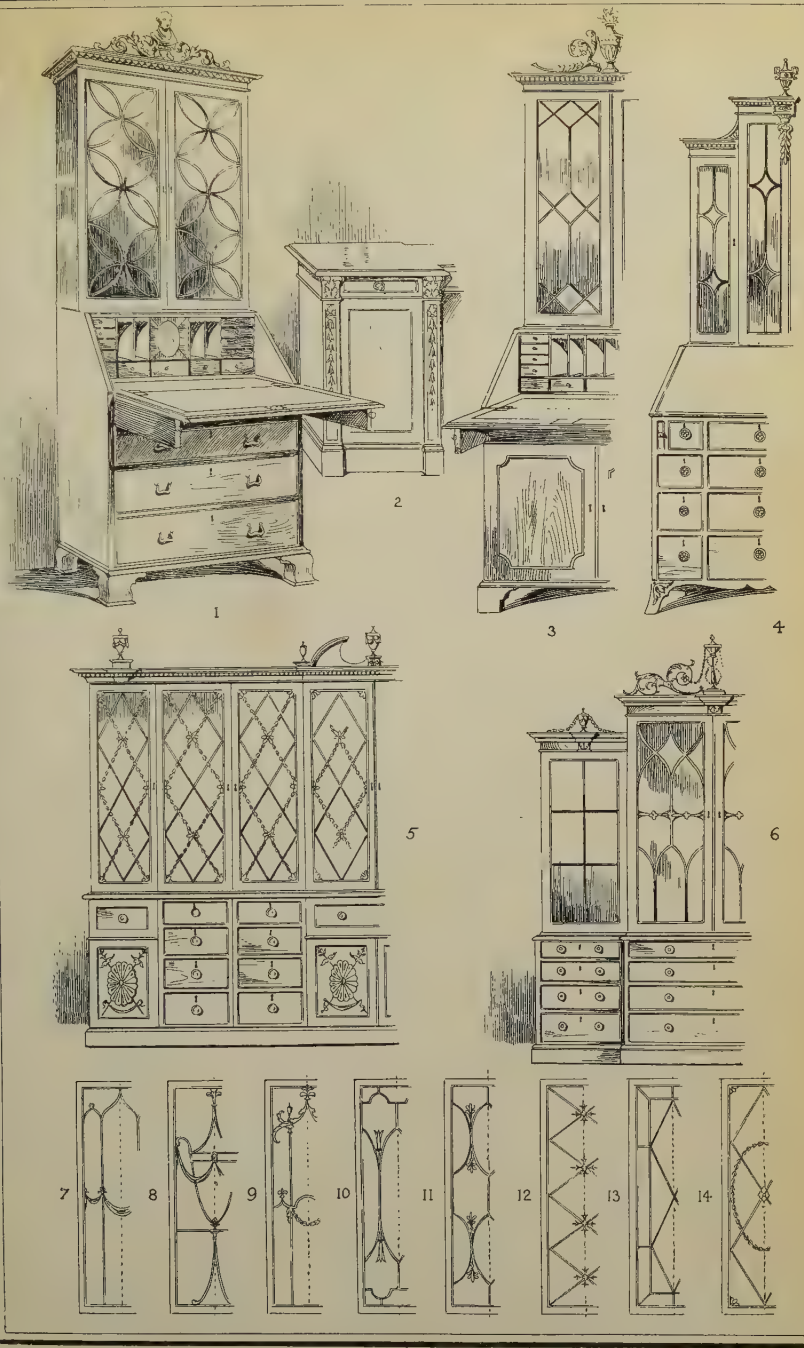
Referring specially to the enrichment of glazed doors by the introduction of wood, or metal, tracery, a plan greatly favoured by our late eighteenth-century cabinet makers, Heppelwhite points out: "The patterns may be greatly varied." He illustrates the truth of this contention by presenting a large number of designs for them, a selection of the most typical of which is shown at the bottom of the plate at present

under discussion. But how is the "Heppelwhite" tracery to be distinguished from others? We shall find that even a careful comparison of these with those that came from the pencil of Sheraton, many of which are illustrated in the following chapter, will leave the reader in a position of no small difficulty when he has to distinguish between the two styles; for the details in both are puzzlingly similar—indeed, not infrequently precisely the same.

Subtle differences, however, in their disposition or arrangement will become apparent if we place side-by-side those belonging to each style respectively, and submit them to a careful and thoroughly comparative examination. To give a broad and general definition, the designs of Heppelwhite's traceries were more angular in character, and consequently less graceful, than those of Sheraton. That this should be the case, is most remarkable, for, as I have already stated, the reverse was the rule in Heppelwhite's chair-backs, and the recollection of that fact is calculated to mislead many when judging his works in which these traceries play a part. But some measure of inconsistency is to be discovered in the work of every genius, and the furniture designer is not exempt from that failing, if indeed a failing it be.

The remaining illustration on Plate IV. (Fig. 2) shows the end of a library, or study, table, on which no particular comment is needed save that we may remark its sturdy and sensible proportions, which were obviously designed for use more than for ornament. Writing-tables of this type were popular from the very first, and their manufacture has never been seriously interrupted since their introduction almost a century-and-a-half ago.

We may now proceed to discover what were Heppelwhite's ideas with respect to the furnishing of the bedroom, and in commencing to deal with these I may say, without further preamble, that they were characterised by far greater simplicity in every way than those which he applied to other

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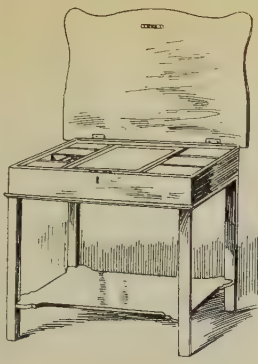
rooms of the house. It is well, moreover, that the reader should fully understand that between the fitting-out of the sleeping apartments of a hundred years or more ago, and of those of to-day, there is a vast difference. The complete bedroom suite, as we have become accustomed to it, with separate and distinct toilet-table, washstand, wardrobe, shaving glass, towel-rail, chairs, etc., designed to match one another in every particular, is comparatively a modern innovation, and one altogether unknown in the days of which I am writing. It is quite useless, therefore, to look for it in any of the many design books of that period. Yet it must not be imagined for one moment that this particular chamber was neglected. That certainly was not the case, notwithstanding that its furnishing was, perhaps, somewhat more fragmentary, if I may so describe it, than at the present day. The chief article of importance in the bedroom, next to the bed itself, was the wardrobe, which, in the words of this designer, "is of considerable consequence, as the conveniences experienced in their use make them a necessary piece of furniture." The arrangement of the upper half, or part, of those in common use during the greater portion of the eighteenth century was very different from that with which we are familiar, as they were all invariably fitted with sliding-shelves, or perhaps a better idea will be conveyed if I describe them as very shallow drawers, open at the front, as portrayed in Fig. 5, Plate V. The "hanging cupboard" of our own times appears to have been practically unknown then; consequently, clothes of every description stored within their recesses had to be folded up, and laid flat, instead of being suspended as they now are. Whether the row of hooks or the drawer is the more desirable for the preservation of articles of wearing apparel is, perhaps, a question for our women-folk to decide, as they form the section of the community chiefly interested. If asked for my opinion on the subject, I should feel very greatly disposed to give my

vote in favour of the older arrangement. Certain it is that protracted suspension from a hook is enough to ruin the "fit" of many a garment, and all manner of devices—such as patent "coat-hangers," etc.,—have been brought out to cope with the difficulty; but none solves the problem more effectually than the old-fashioned drawer or sliding shelf. This, however, is not a question which need be threshed out here.

Figure 3 represents a lady's dressing-table, very similar in arrangement, though not in form, to one that appeared in Sheraton's book (see Fig. 3, Plate VII., in the next chapter), but who was actually responsible for the origination of the idea it is not easy to discover now. The hinged top, which is made in two sections, and encloses the whole of the interior appointments when closed, is so arranged that the two halves can be raised and swung right over, thus doubling the length of the top. This being done, a toilet-glass is revealed, which also is hinged at one end, and is capable of being adjusted to different convenient angles; on each side of this are small boxes for jewellery and accessories requisite to the toilet. The convenience of this piece of furniture, coupled with the small space it occupies, is so great that we cannot but wonder it has not been revived of late years, seeing that economy of space is such an all-important consideration in the planning of our homes. How heartily this little dressing-table would be welcomed in many a so-called "commodious flat"!

In Fig. 2 we have, by way of contrast, one of those handy little corner washstands of a type favoured equally by Heppelwhite and Sheraton (see also Fig. 9, Plate IX., "Sheraton"). Many of these have been preserved to the present day, and for compactness and convenience they are not to be surpassed. And after all, in spite of their extreme simplicity, they are by no means ungraceful.

In Figs. 7 and 8 are two chests of drawers—"dressing-



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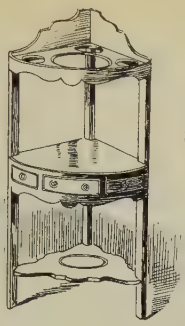

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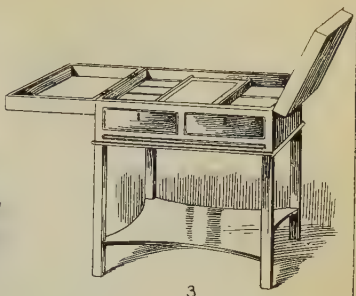

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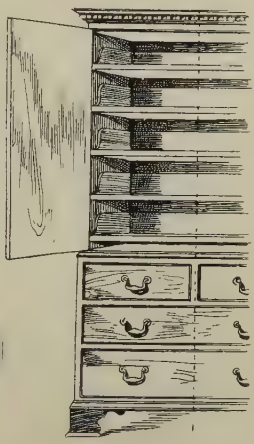

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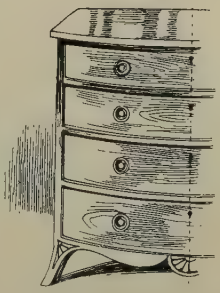

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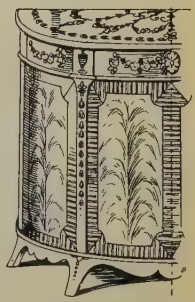

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| Fig. 7. | See 152 |
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drawers" as they were then termed—a class of article which, says Heppelwhite, "admits of but little variation"; yet the "serpentine" front of the first, the graceful "sweep" of the second, and the shaping of the lower part of the cases of both, impart a distinct charm and individuality to them which at once raises them above the commonplace.

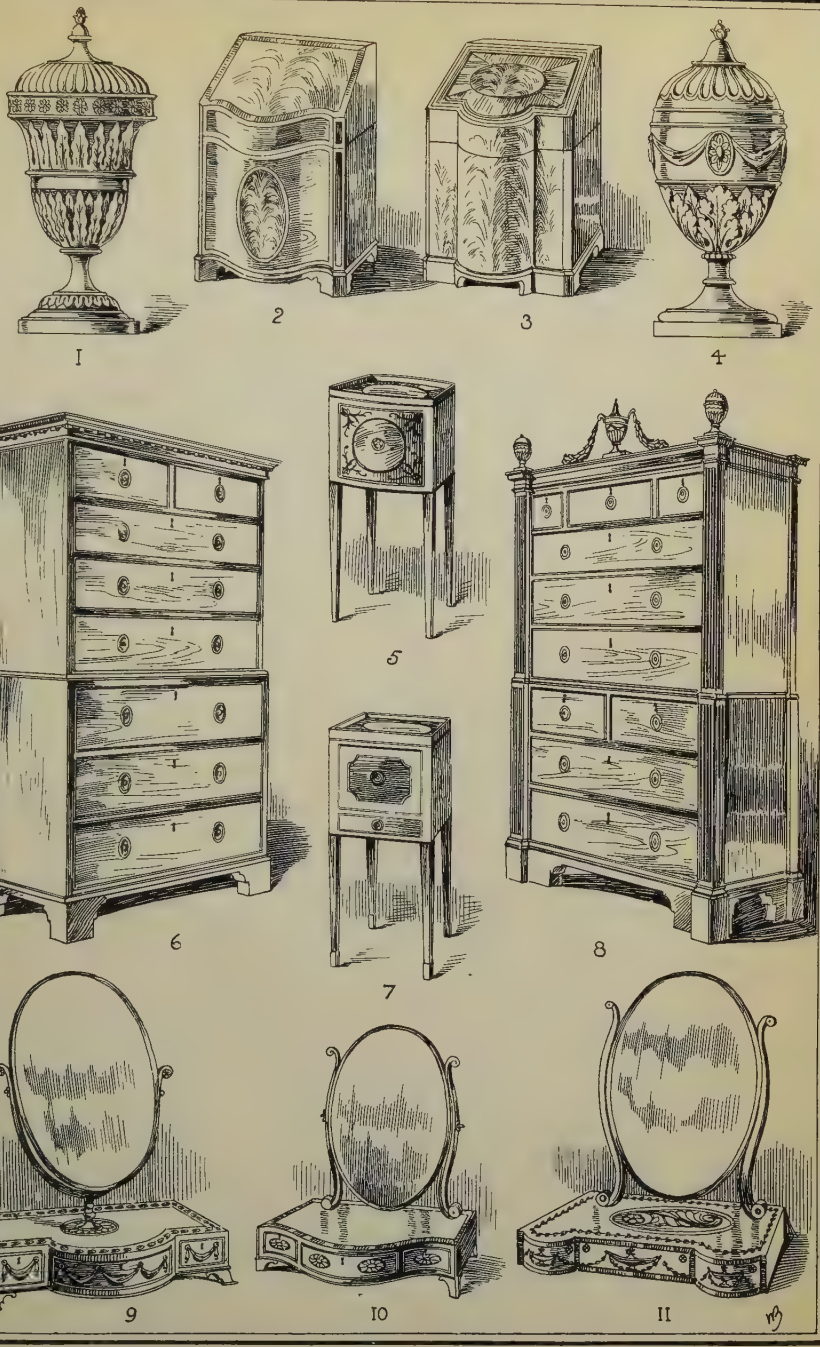
With Fig. 9 we return to work of a more ornate character. This "commode," as it is styled, is classed in Heppelwhite's book under the heading "Dressing Apparatus," but, in his description of it, the designer states that it is "adapted for the drawing-room," and explains further: "Within are shelves which answer the use of a closet or cupboard. It may have one principal door in front, or one at each end; they are made of various shapes, and being used in the principal rooms require considerable elegance. The panels may be of satinwood, plain or inlaid; the top, and also the border round the front, should be inlaid. The tops of these are frequently inlaid or painted work." It must be obvious, then, that this piece was never intended to play a part in the operations of the toilet, notwithstanding the place it occupies under "Dressing Apparatus."

One of the most sensible and serviceable articles of furniture originated by the cabinet makers of the eighteenth century was, without doubt, the double chest of drawers—the "High Boy," or "Tall Boy," as it was often called. These chests, with their wealth of accommodation for clothes, house linen, and soft goods of every description, always have brought, and always will bring, joy to the heart of the careful housewife; and it is astonishing that they have fallen into disrepute, for they are seldom to be met with nowadays, except in the form of treasured old examples. If any objection is to be urged against their use it is that the upper drawers, by reason of their height from the ground, are somewhat inaccessible; but they may be reserved for the storage of linen and other articles not often

required for use, and which, when wanted, might easily be reached by the aid of a pair of steps or a chair. If any doubt as to their desirability in the home be experienced, let the opinion of our women-folk be consulted, and all doubt will be set at rest.

Chippendale was among the first responsible for the perpetuation of the "Tall Boy," and Heppelwhite, following his example, also devoted his attention to its development, as may be seen by reference to Figs. 6 and 8, Plate VI. While providing ample accommodation for the safe storage of household linen, clothes, etc., as already pointed out, they are by no means unattractive pieces of furniture, extremely simple as is their form. They were made of various dimensions, but the height was usually about the same, viz. :—five feet, six inches. Fig. 8, with its fluted pilasters at the angles of the corners, is characterised by greater dignity and sturdiness of appearance than are usually associated with this style, and recalls strongly much of the old "Queen-Anne" woodwork. Mahogany was the wood almost invariably employed in the manufacture of these double chests of drawers, and in the latter part of the century it was often enriched by satinwood "banding" (long thin strips of satinwood inlay).

Figures 5 and 7 show two pedestal cupboards, types which were not quite so commodious, perhaps, as their modern somewhat cumbrous and generally unattractive descendants, but they were certainly lighter in construction and far more graceful. Figs. 9, 10, and 11 illustrate three dainty little inlaid mahogany toilet-glasses, of a kind which usually occupied a place of honour on the top of the "dressing-chest" in the bedroom or dressing-room, and sometimes even in that woman's *sanctum sanctorum*, the boudoir. Now that the swing looking-glass has become part and parcel of the toilet-table, the need for such delightful little mirrors as those illustrated, with their graceful frames, and delicately

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Figs. 1–4. See 158

,, 5–11. ,, 154

inlaid or painted bases, has almost disappeared, consequently the articles themselves, for the most part, also have been banished. True, a few are still made, but they are a mere "drop in the bucket."

As a final illustration of bedroom furniture, on Plate VII. is presented a typical example of the "Heppelwhite" "four-poster" bedstead (Fig. 13), together with three characteristic bed-pillars (Figs. 9, 10, and 11). A comparison of these with those designed by Sheraton will furnish demonstration of the fact that, though some similarity exists between the work of the two designers, that of Heppelwhite was far less ornate than that of his contemporary, greater reliance being placed on carefully considered proportion, and the harmonious disposition of the various turned members, than on elaboration of detail. (See bed-pillars, Figs. 5, 6, 7, 8, Plate VII., "Sheraton").

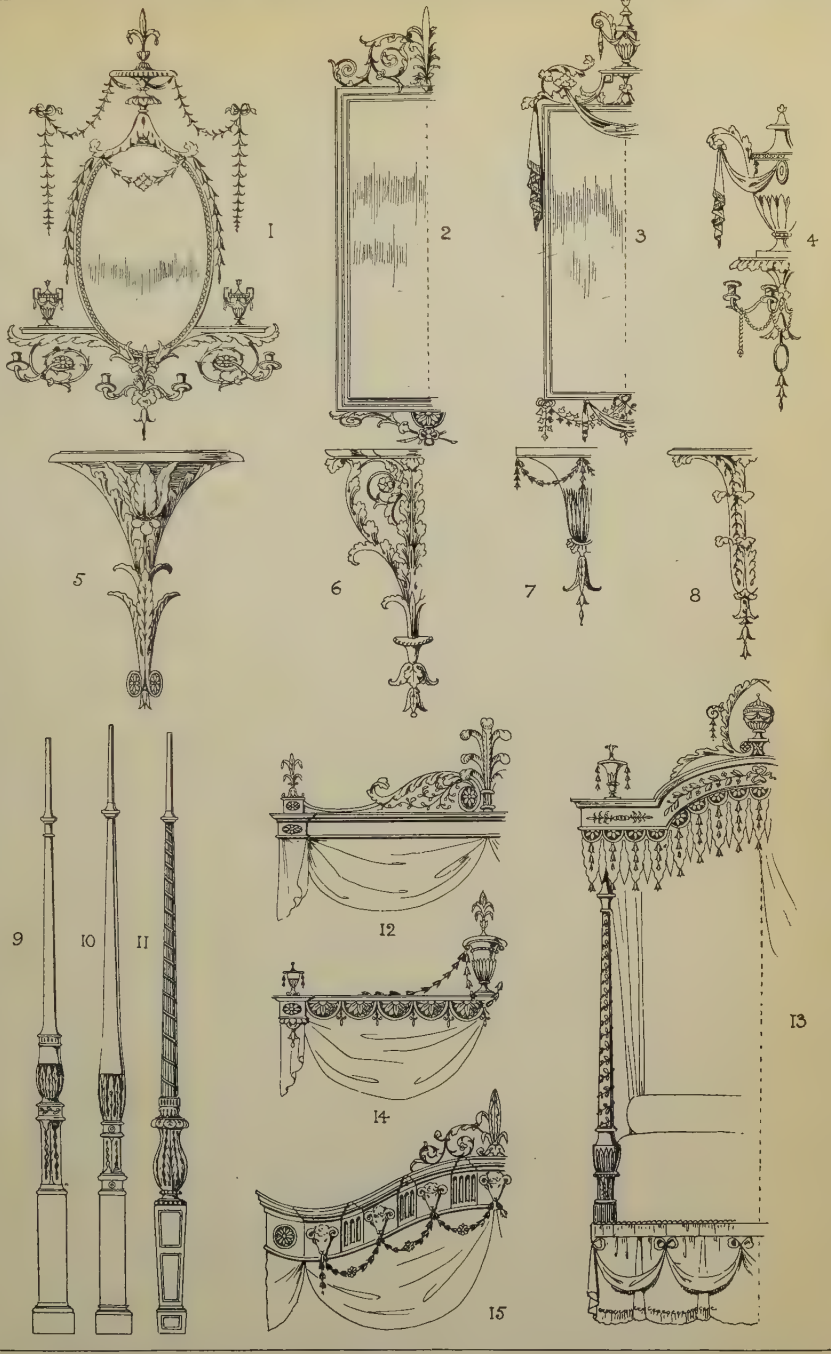
With regard to the draping of his bedsteads, Heppelwhite gives the following advice: "It may be executed of almost any stuff which the loom produces. White dimity, plain or corded, is peculiarly applicable for the furniture, which, with a fringe with a gymp head, produces an effect of elegance and neatness truly agreeable." The designer continues: "The Manchester stuffs have been wrought into bed furniture with good success. Printed cottons and linens are also very suitable, the elegance and variety of patterns of which afford as much scope for taste, elegance, and simplicity as the most lively fancy can wish. In general, the lining to these kinds of furniture is a plain white cotton. To furniture of a dark pattern a green silk lining may be used with good effect." (The word "furniture" as used here by Heppelwhite applies to the hangings. It is an old-fashioned trade term.)

I need hardly point out that there is a considerable difference between the "Chippendale" and the "Heppelwhite" bedstead, the latter being much lighter and more "elegant" in every respect than its forerunner. The top-heavy and

over-draped canopy is superseded by a light and graceful structure thoroughly in keeping, both as regards proportion and design, with the rest of the bedstead, and entirely free from that extraordinary medley of French, Chinese, and other nondescript detail which went so far to mar the productions of the preceding period.

The bed illustrated on Plate VII. was, in one of its renderings, draped with dove-coloured satin, lined with green silk, and so "dressed-up" must have presented a very gay appearance. Figs. 12, 14, and 15, on the same plate, are designs "suitable for cornices for either beds or windows"; while above, in Figs. 1 to 8, are a girandole, wall mirrors, and three or four brackets. It was in articles of this fancy class that this designer employed most freely the decoration of a finikin, almost "wiry," type, to which I have already referred. They were finished in gilt, and burnished, or coloured in order to accord with the tones predominating in the room for which they were intended. They were telling enough in their way, it is true, and helped to give an effective finish to the complete schemes of furnishing of which they formed a part; but they cannot, in my opinion, be so highly commended as most of Heppelwhite's productions. Their ornamental detail throughout is of a character far more suitable in every respect for execution in marquetry or painting than in pierced carving, their production in which is undesirable. The delicate festoons, swags, scraps of drapery, and foliations would, and do, snap off at the least provocation. But enough has been said on this head.

Having by this time, I hope, succeeded in conveying a fairly adequate idea of Heppelwhite's notions concerning the furnishing of the drawing-room, bedroom, library, and study, I will now turn to the consideration of the dining-room, and here, of course, the sideboard occupies a place of no small importance. It must be understood, however, that the sideboard, in the form most familiar to us, had not come into

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Figs. 1–8. See 156 *Page*

Figs. 12, 14, 15. See 156 *Page*

existence at the time of which I am writing. Fortunately—speaking, of course, from the artistic standpoint—the elaborate conglomeration of shelves, spindles, brackets, and bevelled mirrors, all too well known to us to-day, found no place in the calculations of the eighteenth-century cabinet maker. If he added any superstructure to his "sideboard" proper, he was content with introducing merely a more or less ornate brass railing or gallery at the back and sides, sometimes supporting candelabra, in order to give a "finish" to the woodwork, and to serve as a support for the display of plate. The modern sideboard not infrequently has the appearance of being chiefly an object lesson in the skill of the glass-beveller and silverer; but matters are improving in this direction, and one of the chief reasons for this is the return of the twentieth-century cabinet maker to the study of eighteenth-century models. The sideboard in any form, as distinct from the "side-table," as a matter of fact, was quite a novelty even at the period when Heppelwhite's book appeared. In writing of it that designer states: "The great utility of this piece of furniture has procured it a very general reception, and the convenience it affords renders a dining-room incomplete without a sideboard."

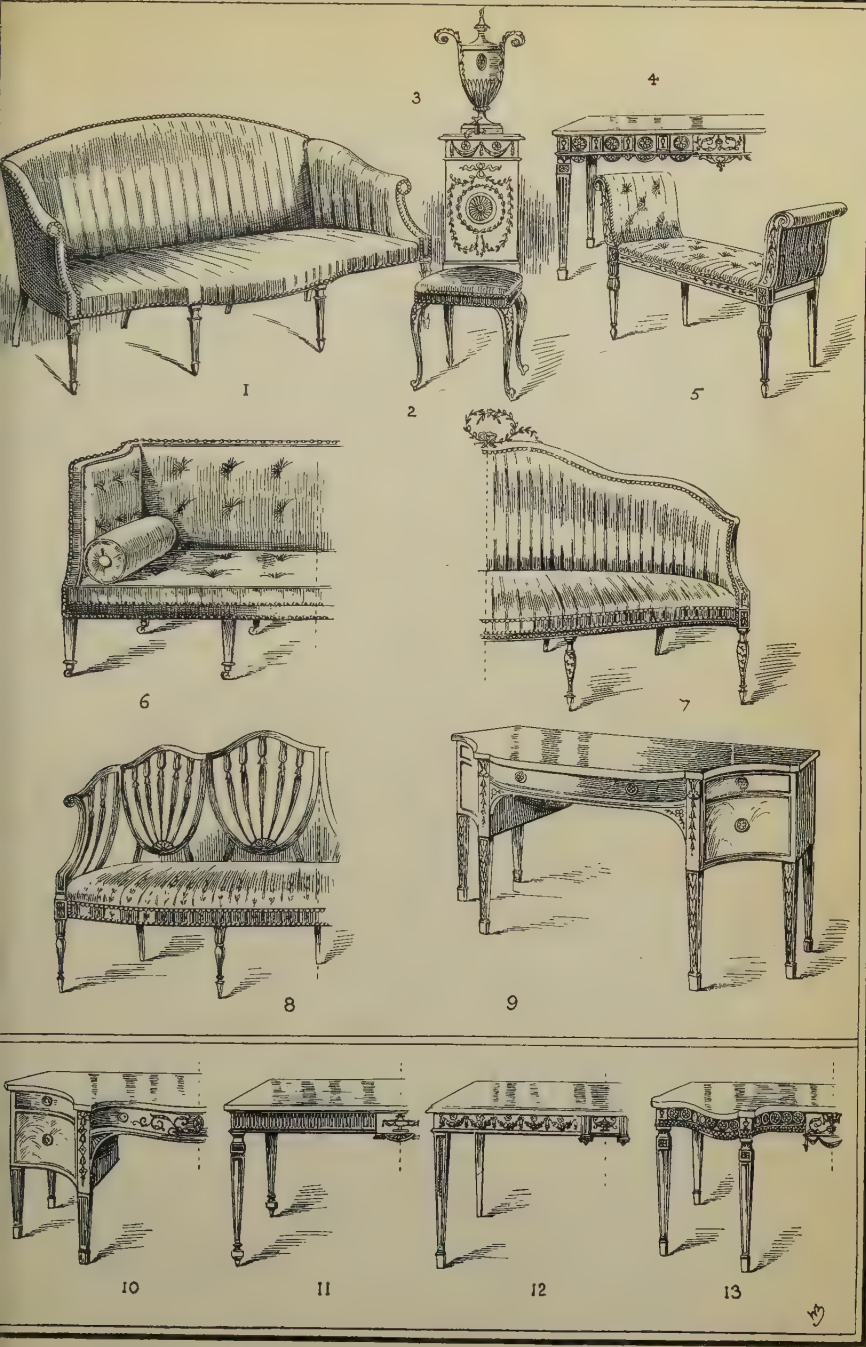
As will be apparent upon an examination of Plate VIII., the article which Heppelwhite provided to serve the purposes generally associated with the sideboard was most frequently little more than a mere table, of more than ordinarily ornate design, it is true (see Figs. 4, 11, 12, and 13), to place against the wall or in a recess; that is to say, veritably a "side-table" in form as well as in name. In such cases, this table proper was "supported" at each end by a decorative "pedestal" or cupboard (see Fig. 3, Plate VIII.), surmounted by a graceful vase, the various uses of which will be explained presently. One of the two pedestals was nearly always lined with tin, as it was destined to serve the purpose of a plate-warmer, being furnished for that purpose with racks and a

heater. The other pedestal was generally set apart for the storage of crockery.

The decorative vases which found a place upon them, says Heppelwhite, "may be used to hold water for the use of the butler, or iced water for drinking, which is enclosed in an inner partition, the ice surrounding it; or may be used as knife-cases, in which case they are made of wood, carved, painted, or inlaid; if used for water they may be made of wood or of copper japanned. The height of the pedestal is the same as the sideboard" (3 feet) "and 16 or 18 inches square; the height of the vase about 2 feet 3 inches."

Figures 1 and 4, Plate VI., represent two of these vase knife-cases; and Figs. 2 and 3 on the same plate two knife-cases of a more common and familiar type. The former, more often than not, were made in satinwood, and the knives were fitted in to the body into baize-covered grooves. When it was desired to remove or replace the knives, the top of the vase was kept-up out of the way by means of a small spring, fitted to the stem in such a manner as to act as secure support. Cases such as those shown in Figs. 2 and 3, Plate VI., were most usually of mahogany, inlaid with satinwood, and sometimes with other veneers of delicate tones of colour. Satinwood itself was sometimes employed for the construction of the main body, as in the vase forms, and afterwards enriched with daintily designed and executed inlay and brush work. Here, once again, we have an article that has been driven out of our homes by modern "improvements"; but are not our dining-rooms, at least so far as their furnishing is in question, all the poorer by reason of its absence? Which is to be preferred, I would ask—the modern knife-basket or the old "Heppelwhite" vase or case? Can there be two opinions on that point?

But this designer, as I have already indicated, did not rest content with the somewhat primitive "side-table," with its attendant cupboards and vases, when he saw that such an

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| Fig. 1. | See 159 | Fig. 5. | See 160, 261 | Figs. 8–10. | See 159 |
| ,, 2. | ,, 160, 246 | ,, 6. | ,, 159, 160 | ,, 11–13. | ,, 157 |

arrangement was coming to be regarded as inadequate for the needs of the times. He advanced several steps further; and, indeed, played a most important part in the inauguration of the true and typical late eighteenth-century sideboard, which attained its highest point of development under the hands of Thomas Sheraton; and which, though it has been superseded, has never yet been excelled for combined grace and utility. It is true that Heppelwhite did not go very far in this direction; but the few attempts he did essay were of great moment when they were made, and were, withal, eminently successful, as may be seen by reference to Figs. 9 and 10, Plate VIII.

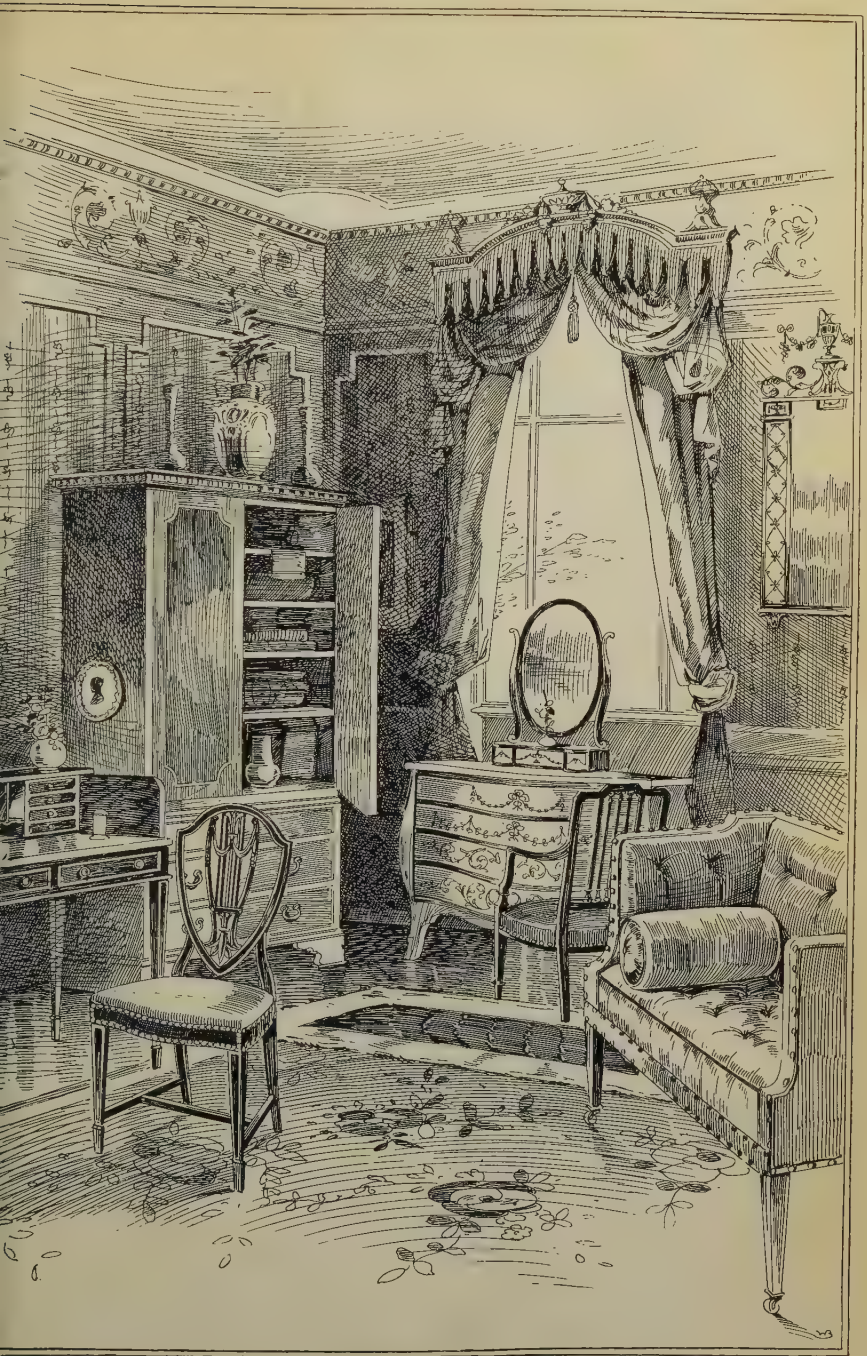
In connection with these, a special note should be taken that the designer with whose productions I am now dealing *always employed the concave corner.* He was possibly actuated in doing so, on the one hand, by the grace of the line so obtained, in conjunction with the elliptic, or "bow," and "serpentine" centre; and by the consideration, on the other, that it occupied far less space than would a perfectly straight front. The "Sheraton" sideboard, on the contrary, *always has the convex corner* (see Fig. 8, Plate IV., "Sheraton"). This is a notable difference that should not be lost sight of by the student and collector, for it is quite sufficient to settle finally and conclusively the sometimes vexed question of authenticity. In other respects many "Heppelwhite" and "Sheraton" sideboards are almost identical.

Before concluding this chapter I must touch upon yet another section of the work of this designer—the one which includes seats of various descriptions other than chairs. Among these, sofas naturally come first in importance, and four most characteristic types are presented in Figs. 1, 6, 7, and 8, Plate VIII. The frames in these cases were almost invariably of mahogany, though sometimes of beech, or some other less expensive wood, japanned. The coverings were of the same materials as those used in the upholstering

of the chairs, and the dimensions of the complete articles were as follow: Length, between 6 and 7 feet; depth, about 30 inches; height of seat-frame, 14 inches; total height in the back, 3 feet 1 inch. Figs. 1 and 4 are the most characteristically "Heppelwhite" of the set, for Fig. 6 has rather more squareness than is usually associated with the style; while Fig. 7 partakes largely of the "Louis-Quinze" element, except in the legs which are quite "Sheraton" in feeling. Heppelwhite refers to the design illustrated in Fig. 8 as a "bar-back" sofa, of which he writes: "This kind of sofa is of modern invention, and the lightness of its appearance has procured it a favourable reception in the first circles of fashion. The pattern of the back must match the chairs; these also will regulate the sort of framework and covering." Fig. 2 is a simple stool, also on "Louis-Quinze" lines, and Fig. 5 is a graceful little "window stool to be made in mahogany or japanned, and covered with linen or cotton to match the chairs."

Now that we have remarked how "Heppelwhite" compares with "Chippendale," and, in a measure, with "Sheraton," with respect to the many factors which go to make up the style individually, and have judged each on its own merits, let us glance for a moment at a furnished "Heppelwhite" interior, side-by-side with one belonging to the earlier period, as they are depicted on Plate IX. in this chapter and on Plate VII. in my chapter on "Chippendale." By this means we shall find ample justification for the remarks with which I commenced this review of the later style.

In the preface to his book, as already stated, Heppelwhite proclaimed his intention to endeavour to "unite elegance and utility," and in reading through his notes upon his various designs we find the words "elegance" and "elegant" recurring continually. Far from being devoid of meaning in the connection in which they are used there,



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they really give us the keynote of all this designer's work, and clearly indicate the spirit which actuated him in the accomplishment of everything he undertook. He saw perfectly that a demand had arisen for a greater measure of brightness in the furnishing of the home, and that the public were no longer prepared to remain content with the gloomy dignity that had prevailed for all too long a time. It was apparent to him that furniture of a lighter construction, exhibiting greater refinement in its enrichment, and providing something more inspiriting in point of colour than the somewhat sombre, though undeniably rich, tones of old Spanish mahogany was wanted; in fact, that the need for a higher degree of "elegance" absolutely must be satisfied. He accordingly set to work with a will to do all within his power to satisfy that demand, and, in his endeavours, he brought about many most notable changes. First, he recognised that strength, and consequent stability, in furniture might be secured most effectually without the aid of undue thickness of wood or heaviness of construction. Every part, therefore, that *could* be "thinned down," without the sacrifice of strength, *was* thinned down by him, and with admirable judgment and taste. That good and honest construction, notwithstanding this, was *not* sacrificed in the course of these changes is amply proved by the almost perfect condition of his productions which remain to us, and which, owing to their lasting qualities, are entitled to as great confidence as upon the day they were first made, over a hundred years ago. Elegance of form having been gained, the highest attainable refinement, and a greater variety of colour in the enrichment by which that form was to be beautified, were the next points to be considered, and in these directions Heppelwhite was again brilliantly successful.

He was by no means disposed to underrate the value or beauty of mahogany as a "furniture wood"; the very reverse was the case, as is demonstrated to the full by the

extent to which he availed himself of its services. Neither did he fail to appreciate the value of carving as a means of decoration. He appreciated thoroughly both wood and method, and utilised them as often as their use assisted him towards the attainment of the end he had in view. But he was too enterprising to stop at this point. He bore constantly in mind the fact that other fine hardwoods besides mahogany existed, of choice "figure" and beautiful colouring, and that carving was not the only decorative medium available. As the employment of either on too great a scale was not conducive to the consummation of his desires, he called to his aid every rare wood that could possibly be secured, and, furthermore, set the marquetry cutters, inlayers, and wielders of the brush to carry out the dainty, and generally most chaste, conceptions that were constantly emanating from his exceptionally fertile brain.

The above is, I think, a fair, and not by any means too eulogistic, summing-up of the aspirations and methods of this designer, and the outcome of them is to be found in part in the plates which constitute by far the most important portion of this chapter, and without which my notes would be of but small value.

# "SHERATON"

In 1751, just three years prior to that in which Chippendale's great book, "The Gentleman's and Cabinet Maker's Director," was first published, there was born at Stockton-on-Tees, of humble parentage, a child who, though destined to a life of comparative penury—such is the irony of fate—nevertheless won for himself in after years, by force of industry and genius, a reputation second to none in the annals of the cabinet-making of that period. He did more to elevate the craft of which he was so proud, in his own and subsequent times, than any man of his or any other age. The story of poor Sheraton's life, or the small glimpse of it that has been accorded to us, is indeed full of pathos. It is far from easy to obtain biographical details of our eighteenth-century cabinet makers. In most cases none is available; but of Sheraton, fortunately, a few particulars have been handed down to us. Though somewhat meagre, they are nevertheless of intense interest to all earnest students of the history of the furniture of the Georgeian Era who are not content to regard these old household gods merely as examples of more or less admirable craftsmanship, but who desire to look beneath the surface—to know something of the conditions of the times in which they were made, and, if possible, to try and conjure up some picture, however vague and shadowy, of the lights and shadows of the lives of the men who designed and made them.

Material upon which to base the personal details of such pictures is unfortunately wanting. We may search through our great biographical dictionaries, and resort even to the "Encyclopædia Britannica" in vain, to find it. True, this

last-named publication does contain mention of Chippendale, and goes so far as to inform us that the furniture designed by him was decorated with "marquetry . . . laid out with diapers of two woods, or with medallions and pattern work," a statement which we know to be entirely wrong. In addition to this, the names merely of Heppelwhite and Sheraton are given. So it is useless for us to look for much assistance in that direction.

Our endeavour for the moment must be to discover, as far as possible, all that is connected with the career of the designer and cabinet maker—for he, too, "doubled the parts" —whose name heads these pages. In so doing we shall find ample food for reflection. In the first place, there can be no possible doubt that his artistic — *not* financial — success in after life as a designer is to be accounted for by the fact that from early childhood he was endowed with a strong bent for drawing, the steady cultivation of which, supplemented by a thorough practical training at the bench, provided a solid foundation for his future work. It seems, as I have indicated, that his career, from the outset, was nothing more nor less than one long-continued and bravely-sustained struggle. We find a saddening picture of the environment of his closing years in the Memoirs of Adam Black, who visited him on more than one occasion when a boy seeking his fortune in London, and, indeed, found employment under him for a time. In these Memoirs the writer says: "He (Sheraton) lived in a poor street in London, his house half-shop, half-dwelling-house, and looked like a Methodist preacher worn out, with threadbare black coat. I took tea with them one afternoon. There was a cup and saucer for the host, and another for his wife, and a little porringer for their daughter. The wife's cup and saucer were given to me, and she had to put up with another little porringer. My host seemed a good man, with some talent. He had been a cabinet maker, and was now author, publisher, and teacher of drawing, and, I believe,

occasionally preacher." Black assisted Sheraton in some capacity, which is not stated. Describing some of his experiences when so occupied, he continues: "I wrought among dirt and bugs, for which I was remunerated with half-a-guinea. Miserable as the payment was, I was ashamed to take it from the poor man. This many-sided, worn-out encyclopædist and preacher is an interesting character, and would have taken the fancy of Dickens. He is a man of talent, and, I believe, of genuine piety. He understands the cabinet business—I believe was bred to it. He is a scholar, writes well, and, in my opinion, draws masterly; is an author, bookseller, and teacher. We may be ready to ask how comes it to pass that a man with such abilities and resources is in such a state? I believe his abilities and resources are his ruin in this respect, for by attempting to do everything he does nothing."

The house referred to was, doubtless, the broken-down old place in Soho, where, after failing to make a financial success of the practical side of his craft, Sheraton settled down to design for other people, prepare his books and plates for the engraver and printer, and publish other literature of various kinds from his pen—notably discourses upon theological subjects. But when we read over Adam Black's words to-day how forcibly we are struck by the poverty of that writer's appreciation—if appreciation it may be called—of Sheraton's life's-work in connection with his craft, and how time has belied the all too sweeping assertion that "by attempting to do everything he does nothing." "Nothing" indeed! On the contrary, he did great things; so great, in fact, that, after the lapse of over a century, his name has become a household word; and, further, there are but few furnishing showrooms in the kingdom to-day where evidences of his healthy and far-reaching influence are not to be found.

In preceding chapters we have compared the respective

works of Chippendale and Heppelwhite; when we come to see how the productions of the former stand in relation to those of Sheraton we shall find that the contrast between the two is exceptionally strong. While both based their styles, to a very large extent, on the French, the majority of the models to which Chippendale went for inspiration were produced at the most extravagant periods of the Rococo. Sheraton, with his greater refinement of taste, drew such of his ideas as were not purely original from the "Louis-Seize" —by far the most chaste and refined of all French styles— when occasion demanded that he should cater for those who demanded "something French," and would be content with nothing else. So accurate and admirable, indeed, was his interpretation of that style that his version of it is commonly called in France "Louis-Seize-Anglaise," and, as we shall see, not without a certain amount of justification.

In 1791 appeared "The Cabinet Maker's and Upholsterer's Drawing-Book" (in four parts), by Thomas Sheraton. In this the author describes himself as "cabinet maker," and puts forward his book as being "recommended by many workmen of the first abilities in London, who have themselves inspected the work." It is in this volume that the best of this old master's designs are to be found.

That Sheraton's character had much in it that was idealistic is, in a certain measure, indicated by the frontispiece to "The Cabinet Maker's and Upholsterer's Drawing-Book," which is purely symbolical, though dignified in conception, and consists of a group of classically draped figures. The object of their introduction is explained by the author in a somewhat grandiloquent "apology," well worth quoting, even if only on account of its quaintness of diction. He says: "To show in as pleasing a way as I could the Stability of this Performance and the subject of the book in general, I have, by the figure on the right hand, represented Geometry standing on a rock, with a scroll

of diagrams in his hand, conversing with Perspective, the next figure to him, who is attentive to the Principles of Geometry as the ground of his Art—which Art is represented by the frame on which he rests his hand. On the left, near the window, is an artist busy designing, at whose right hand is the Genius of Drawing, presenting the Artist with various patterns. The back figure is Architecture, measuring the shaft of a Tuscan column, and on the background is the Temple of Fame, to which a knowledge of these arts directly leads."

Truly, poor Sheraton found the key to the portals of that Temple, and has been posthumously crowned with the laurels after which he fought so hard; though during his lifetime, alas! he wanted for the barest necessaries of existence.

After the perusal of the foregoing sentences, which, though they read curiously now, were quite in the spirit of the times when they were written, it is amusing to note how faithfully Sheraton followed the example set by his contemporaries and indulged in uncomplimentary references to the books brought out by his predecessors and competitors. Most are summarily dismissed in a few lines as almost beneath notice, because they contained little or no instruction concerning the arts of drawing, geometry, and perspective. In dealing with Heppelwhite's book, this designer says: "If we compare some designs, particularly the chairs, with the newest taste, we shall find that this work has already caught the decline, and perhaps, in a little time, will suddenly die in the disorder. This instance may serve to convince us of that fate which art books of the same kind will ever be subject to. Yet it must be owned that books of this sort have their usefulness for a time, and when through change of fashions they are become obsolete, they serve to show the taste of former ages."

In the case of Heppelwhite, at least, the recovery from

"the decline"—if that disease ever really touched his works, which is very much to be doubted—was wonderfully rapid, and remarkably complete. The "sudden death from the disorder" has not occurred, and, notwithstanding the lapse of time since it was prophesied, need not be anticipated yet awhile.

We have sufficient evidence in Sheraton's writings alone, quite independent of the testimony of others, to lead us to recognise the fact that he was a man of exceptional rectitude of character; and I shall make bold to claim that this rectitude is strongly and unmistakably reflected in most of his designs—including even simple chairs and tables. I may be laughed at for making such an assertion; but in that light I regard his designs. Throughout, the work is conscientious in the extreme; and the straight line, free from deviations, predominates everywhere. The "Louis-Quinze," so beloved of Chippendale, exercised no fascination over this upright old master, who very seldom indulged in the introduction of much constructional shaping where he could possibly avoid doing so. It is of the greatest importance that the student should make a particular note of this fact, for it will aid him materially in distinguishing between "Heppelwhite" and "Sheraton," especially where chair-backs are concerned. It is true that each borrowed from the other to a greater or less extent, for, as we have already noted, there are chairs in Heppelwhite's book that are most distinctly "Sheraton," and *vice versa*. Thus, in many instances, it is very easy to confuse the two styles; but they must not be confused, and I am endeavouring in these pages to show how each may be distinguished from the other with every possible degree of certainty.

But to return to "The Cabinet Maker and Upholsterer's Drawing-Book." In explaining its scope, Sheraton remarks: "I find some have expected designs as never were seen, heard of, nor conceived in the imagination of man; whilst others

have wanted them to suit a broker's shop, to save the trouble of borrowing a basin-stand to show a customer. Some have expected it to furnish a country wareroom, to avoid the expense of making-up a good bureau, and double chest of drawers, with canted corners, etc.; and though it is difficult to conceive how these different qualities could be united in a book of so small a compass, yet, according to some reports, the broker himself may find his account in it, and the country master will not be altogether disappointed; whilst others say many of the designs are rather calculated to show what may be done than to exhibit what is or has been done in the trade. According to this the designs turn out to be on a more general plan than what I intended them, and answer, beyond my expectation, the above various descriptions of subscribers. However, to be serious, it was my first plan, and has been my aim through the whole, to make the book in general as permanently useful as I could, and to unite with usefulness the taste of the times; but I could never expect to please all in so small a compass: to compose an entire book for each class of subscribers, and after all, there would be something wanting still."

We must now, however, leave generalisation, and commence our study of "Sheraton" as a style; and following the plan adopted in my chapters on "Chippendale" and "Heppelwhite," we will deal with chairs before considering larger and more imposing pieces.

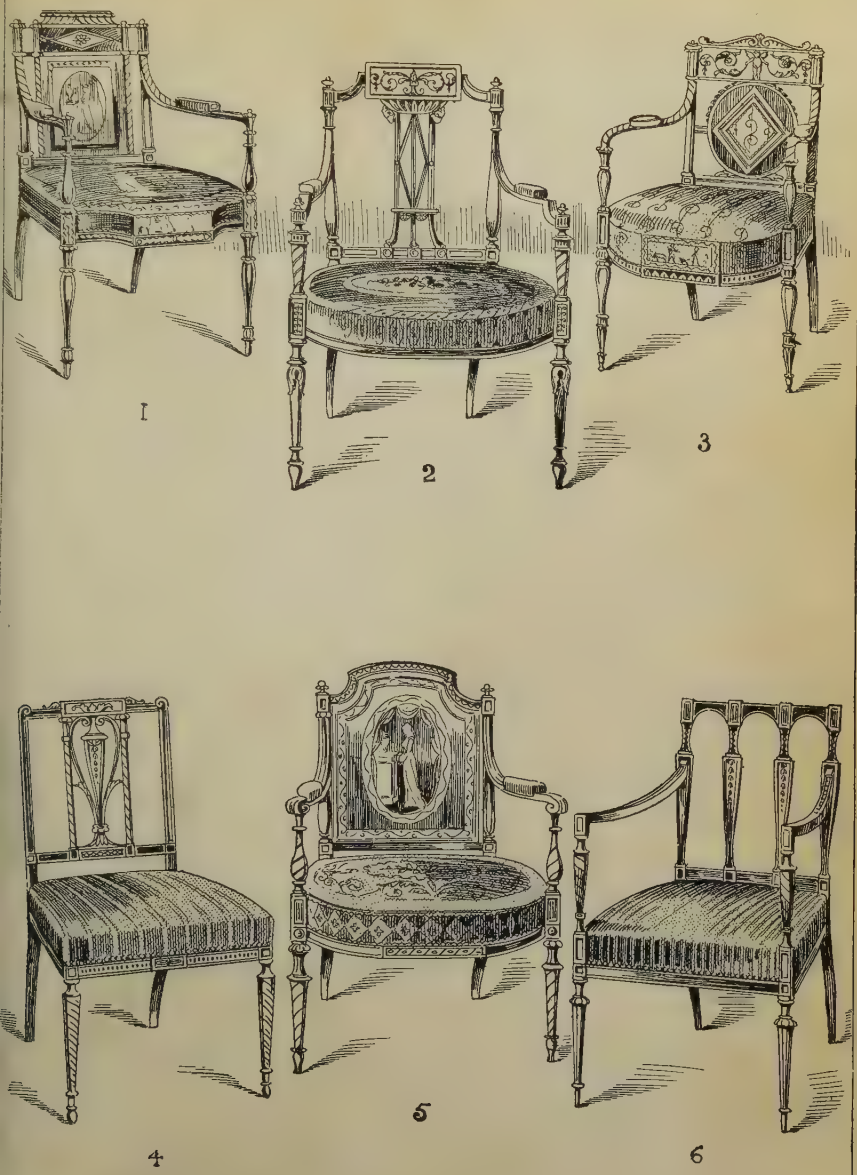
Those depicted on Plate I., in the first place, may be accepted as a preliminary justification of the assertion I have made more than once in these pages, that Sheraton was, in a large number of his designs, very strongly influenced by the "Louis-Seize," and particularly by the work of the French chair makers who had to do with the origination of that style. This is especially apparent in Figs. 1, 2, 3, and 5, which might, without fear of objection, be justly described, after the French fashion, as "Louis-Seize-Anglaise"; though it

must be observed that subtle divergences from the original style mark all five unmistakably as being Sheratonian versions, both in respect of form and embellishment. Still, the source of their inspiration is not to be denied, and I am inclined to think that Sheraton would have been one of the first to acknowledge it, for commercial if not for any other reasons. In his day, all things "French" were in demand in this country, and any designs that savoured of Paris were almost certain of a hearty welcome from the public.

Figures 4 and 6 on the same plate, are, on the other hand, in every respect pure "Sheraton," and that without the "Louis-Seize" qualification; but a better and more complete idea of all the leading characteristics of the chair-work of this master may be gained by an examination of Plate II., upon which his most characteristic chair-backs are represented, and which practically constitutes, in itself, an exhaustive summing-up of his ideas with regard to chairs.

Figures 6 and 15 are exceptions, for they cannot be described as pure "Sheraton," but should rather come under the heading of "Heppelwhite." In the preceding chapter I have dealt somewhat exhaustively with the relationship subsisting between the two shield-shapes as found in these respective styles, explaining how one may be distinguished from the other; but I may remind the reader that, when that form is employed by Sheraton, the curve at the top is in all cases broken in the centre, as shown, instead of being continuous as in the "Heppelwhite" backs. Other subtle points of difference also have been made clear (see page 139). Knowing these, the collector, when called upon to pronounce judgment on chairs of this class, will be able to decide immediately which is which, even when the books in which the illustrations originally appeared are not available for reference—and they seldom are in cases of emergency.

In the majority of his chairs, especially the more expensive, Sheraton, wherever he possibly could, adopted the

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| Fig. 1. | See 171, 174, 261 |
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| Fig. 4. | See 170 |
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| ,, 6. | ,, 170 |

turned leg, in such forms as those shown on Plate I. and Figs. 1, 14, 15, and 16, Plate III., while Heppelwhite almost invariably cultivated the square, though there are exceptions, to which reference has already been made (see page 142). Furthermore, it is most exceptional to discover a genuine "Sheraton" chair with underframing—that is to say, with rails from leg to leg, placed about six inches from the ground, in order to strengthen the lower part—though in some by contemporary makers, based on his style, that feature appears. Those, however, we shall consider in another chapter.

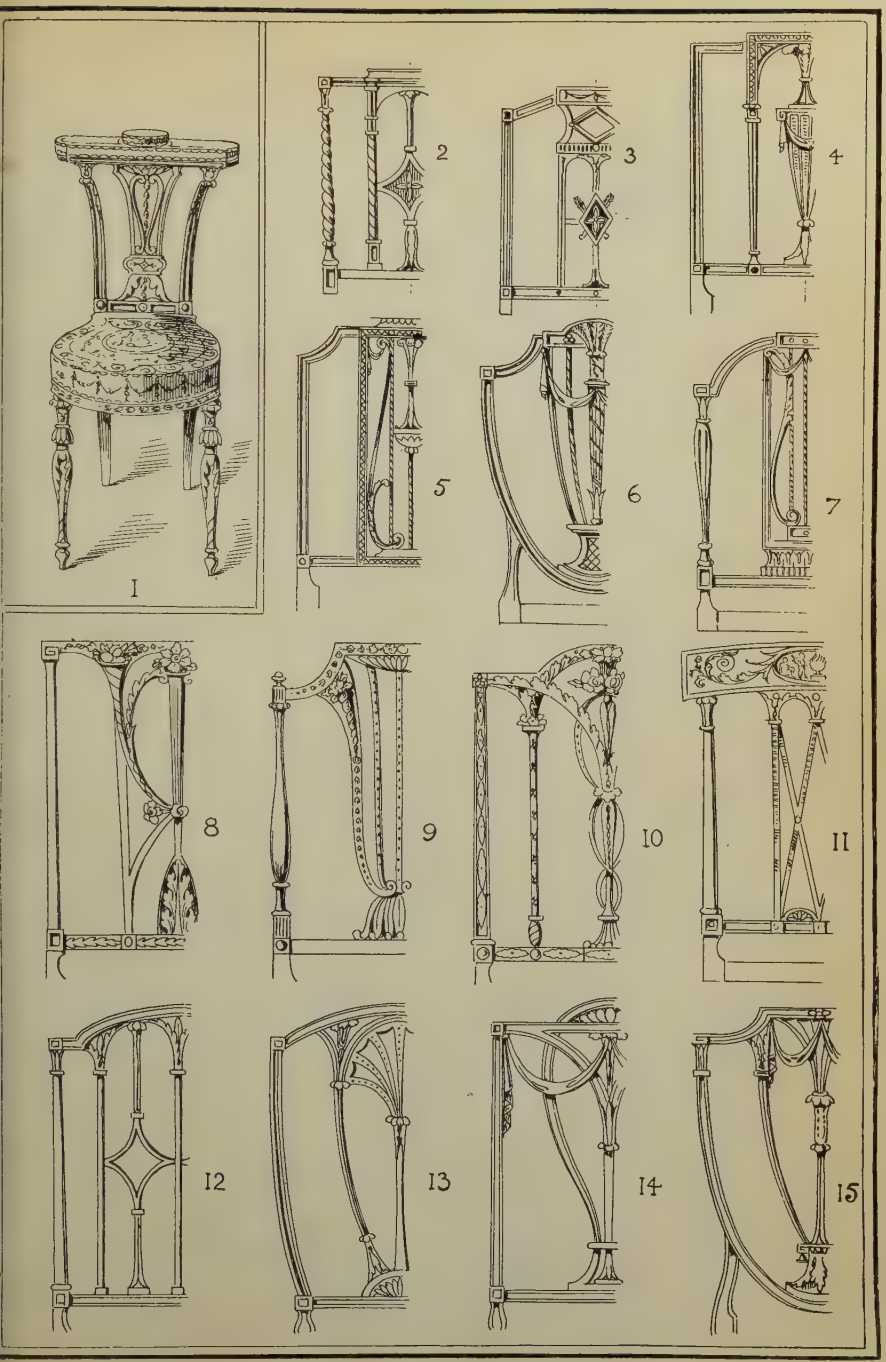
The details employed by Sheraton are, as I have said, closely related to those originated by the creators of the "Louis-Seize." This is natural, for are they not the outcome of a union between the ideas of this designer and that of his French confrères in the craft? It necessarily follows, therefore, that they are distinguished throughout by extreme delicacy and refinement. The reeded and fluted leg, twisted pillar, husks, festoons or "swags" of drapery and flowers; the vase, cornucopiæ, and acanthus-like foliations, constituted for the most part his stock-in-trade in this department; but he elaborated them, rendering them according to his own taste, and disposed them with rare skill, almost always stamping them to a greater or less degree with the mark of his own individuality.

"Sheraton" chairs, and indeed all pieces of furniture in that style, are, with very few exceptions, of mahogany or satinwood. There are very few indeed which are not enriched, at least in some measure, with carving or inlay, though, in special instances, the brush was employed as a means of decoration, and with peculiarly rich effect, as may be gathered from the impression conveyed by Figs. 8, 9, 10, and 11, Plate II., for example. It is exceptionally rare, however, nowadays to secure authentic examples of this painted furniture in even passable condition, for the ravages of time have inevitably played havoc with the delicate painting which

originally embellished them. Some, it is true, have survived almost in entirety, and time has been more than kind to them, deepening the tone of the wood and endowing the colours with a dreamy softness that is altogether beautiful, and impossible to imitate; but the rest have gone the way of most earthly things, helping to verify the truth of the old adage, "Tout lasse, tout passe, tout casse."

Throughout his best work Sheraton never, under any circumstances, permitted the ornament which he employed to take the place of construction, but always made a point of keeping it absolutely subservient to the general form and main constructive lines of his designs. In the enrichment of his productions he was a *decorative* artist in the strictest sense of the word; he never gave way to the temptation, which must have assailed him equally with every designer at some time or another, to trespass beyond the limits imposed by the materials in which his ideas were to be carried out. In this respect he differed greatly, I need hardly say, from Chippendale, who frequently erred in the contrary direction as has been indicated in preceding chapters.

Having in the first place devised what he considered to be a graceful form, which satisfied his hypercritical mind in every particular, and might therefore be depended on to satisfy others less exacting, Sheraton set about to enrich it with such carving, inlay, or painting as he deemed most suitable for the attainment of the object he had in view. The result was almost invariably eminently successful, reflecting the highest credit upon its originator, and exciting the admiration of all possessed of sufficient culture to appreciate such taste and craftsmanship. The consistency with which he adhered to this principle, keeping artistic fitness continually in view, is especially apparent in his chair-backs; but the same rule was brought into force in the designing and construction of the cabinet work which has made his

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name famous, and the chief characteristics of which we shall take into consideration later.

A glance at Fig. 1, Plate II., and a study of the whole of the decorative detail on Plate III., will aid in giving a still more complete conception of "Sheraton" chair making and upholstery generally. In the first we have a "conversation chair," and with reference to this class Sheraton writes: "These conversation chairs are used in library or drawing-rooms. The parties who converse with each other sit with their legs across the seat, and rest their arms on the top rail, which, for this purpose, is made about 3½ inches wide, stuffed, and covered.

"For the convenience of sitting in the manner just mentioned, the chair is made long between front and back, and very narrow in the back and front in proportion. The height of the chair to the stuffing is 3 feet; at the back 10 inches, spreading out in width to the top rail, which is 20 inches in length. The front is 16 inches, and the height of the seat as common." Here, of course, we have the "Louis-Seize" again; as also in the "triple-back" settee, or "sofa," as it was styled, on Plate III. For the rest, the arms, balusters, and turning shown on the same plate will serve as a capital object lesson in the decorative detail of the style under notice.

Reverting for a moment to the "triple-back" settee, it was the designer's intention that the space between the three main divisions of the back should have "a ground-work covered with silk. . . . Against this ground the two columns and the ornament are supposed to rest."

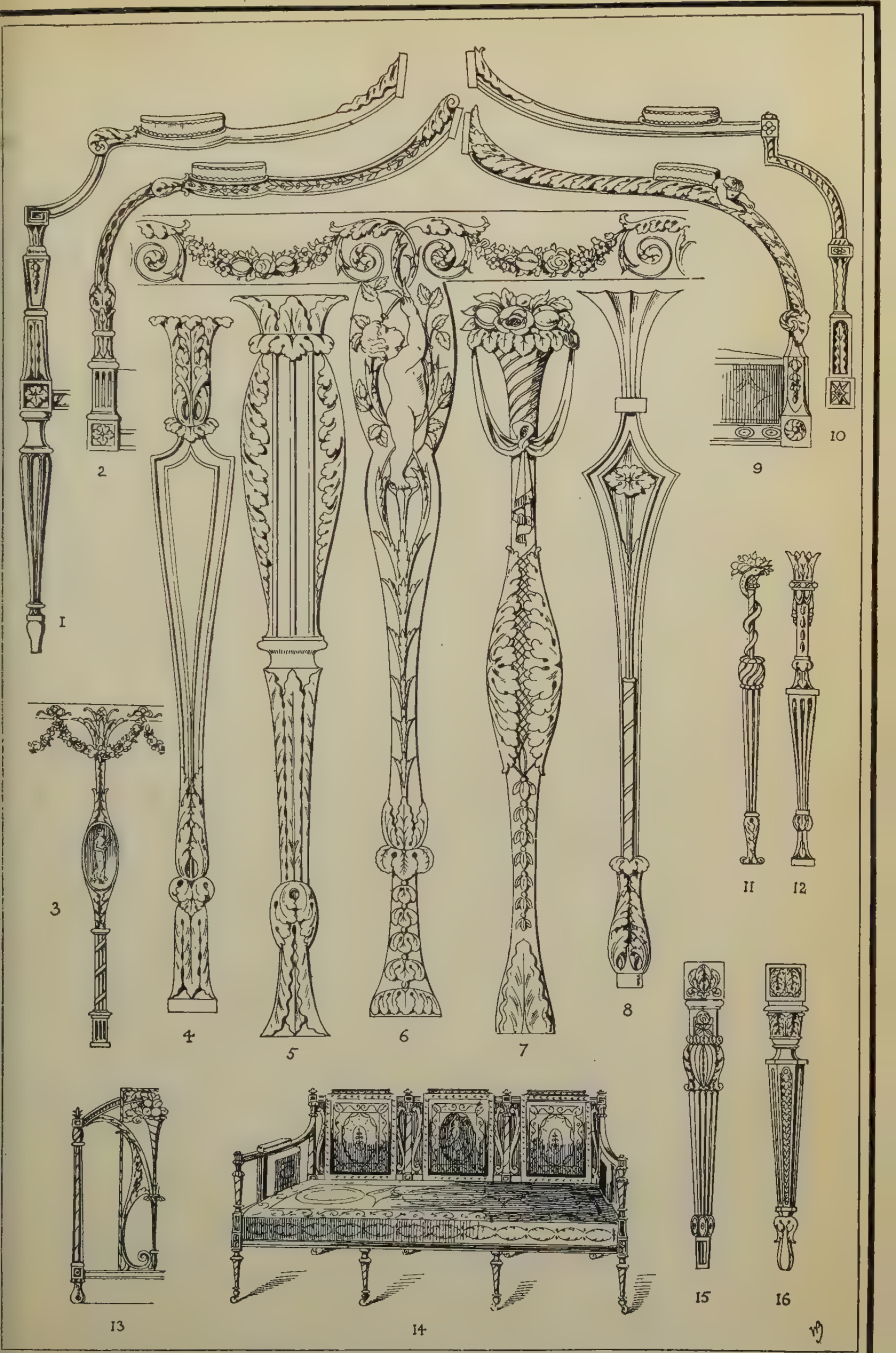
It has been said, by a competent writer on the subject, that Sheraton "might generally be described as the English designer who adapted to our wants the fancies of the court of Marie Antoinette." A more apt summing-up of a certain, and perhaps the most important, section of his work could not be desired; but taken literally, and by itself, it is calculated to convey but a limited idea of this designer's capabilities.

I will now say a word or two about Sheraton's chairs in which upholstery plays the leading part, as in such examples as those in Figs. 1, 3, and 5, Plate I. In instructions regarding their treatment it is specified that: "These chairs are finished in white-and-gold, or the ornaments may be japanned; but the French finish them in mahogany with gilt mouldings. The figures in the tablets above the front rails are on French printed silk or satin sewed on to the stuffing with borders round them. The seat and back are of the same kind as in the ornamental tablet at the top. The top rail is panelled out, and a small gold bead mitred round, and silk pasted on."

So much for the "Sheraton" chair and sofa. We may now turn our attention to the examination of some of that old master's cabinet work; and in so doing it will be convenient for us to commence with his designs for the furnishing of the dining-room, and see, in the first place, what hand he had in the development of the sideboard in the form in which it was then coming into vogue.

It has been explained, in the preceding chapter, that that article, as we know it to-day, found no place in the design books of the eighteenth-century cabinet maker, and I have ventured to express the opinion that the modern type is not such a very vast improvement when compared with the old, except perhaps in respect to increased accommodation for the accessories of the table. But the sideboard of Sheraton was more commodious than that of Heppelwhite, though very similar in form, as we have seen, and shall see further presently; and it is for us to discover now wherein the difference lay. The former has certain distinguishing features, which may be regarded almost in the light of "hall marks," so to speak.

In the first place, I will recapitulate the fact that Sheraton paid but little attention to the "side-table," which plays so important a part in Heppelwhite's book; and seldom intro-

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duced the perfectly straight unbroken front, as Heppelwhite frequently did. In the second place, Sheraton made the corners of his sideboards convex; while Heppelwhite, almost invariably, introduced the concave corner to his designs. By that means, the former considerably enhanced the drawer-space by the difference between the two curves—the concave and the convex. This, as I have said, may be accepted as a practically invariable rule, to which there are few, if any, exceptions.

As will be seen, too, on Plate IV., Sheraton was hardly pleased with the somewhat bare appearance of the sideboard top, pure and simple, without anything to give a finish to it and lead up to the wall above; he formed the idea, therefore, of adding a superstructure of brass, in many cases somewhat elaborate, from which silk or other curtains could be suspended. This plan was seldom, if ever, adopted by Heppelwhite, who, in the treatment of this piece of furniture, cultivated greater simplicity in every respect, and did not by any means exhibit ingenuity equal to that of Sheraton, a quality which I may state without fear of contradiction he did not possess in any very great degree.

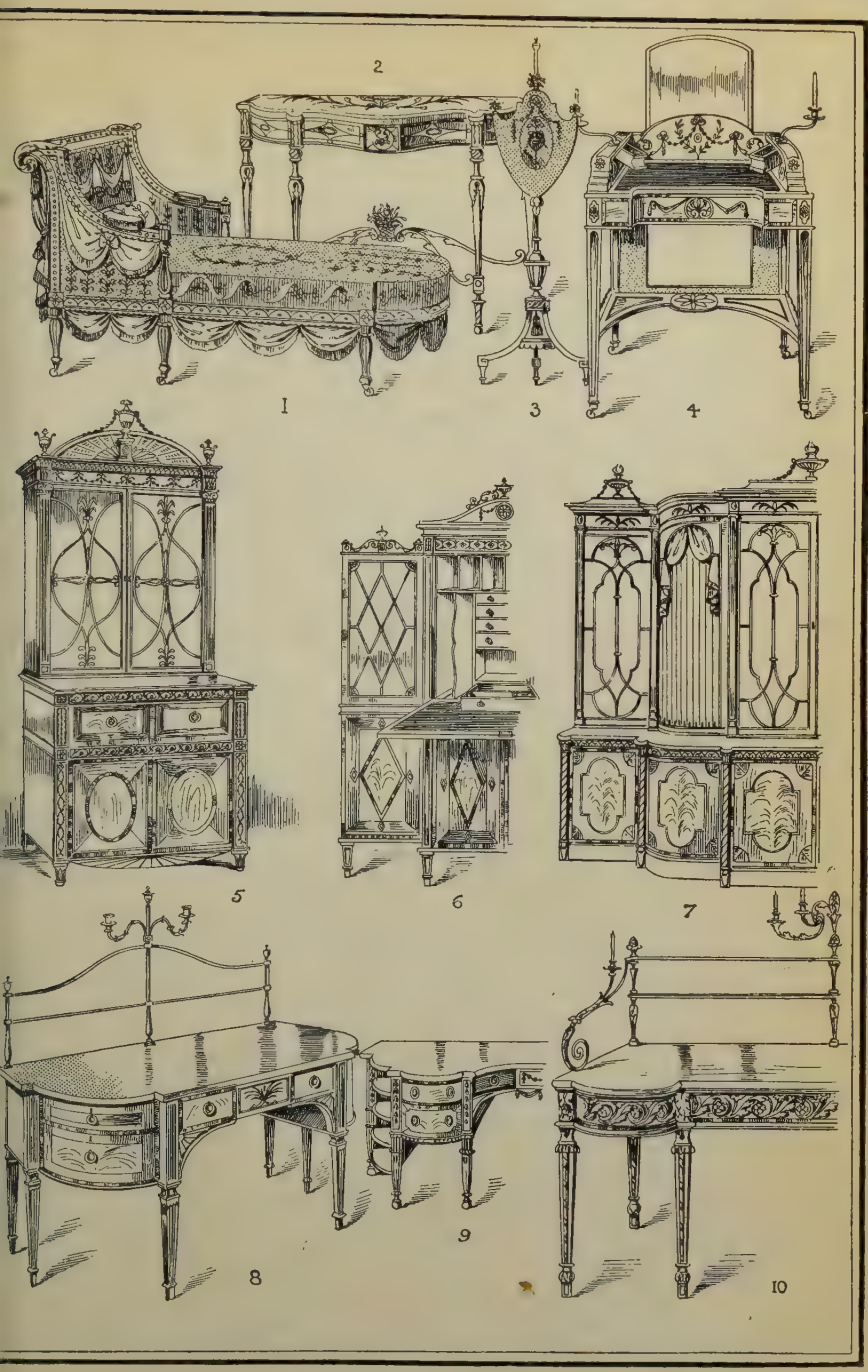
As to the form of the superstructure referred to, Fig. 8, Plate IV., furnishes one example of a type which, says Sheraton, "is used to set large dishes against, and to support a couple of candle or lamp branches in the middle, which, when lighted, give a very brilliant effect to the silver ware. The branches are each of them fixed in one socket, which slides up and down on the same rod to any height, and fixed anywhere by turning a screw. These rods have sometimes returns" (additional rods running at right angles to the back ones) "at each end of the sideboard" (see Fig. 10), "and sometimes they are made straight the whole length of the sideboard" (see Fig. 8), "and have a narrow shelf in the middle" (see Fig. 10 again) "made of fine half-inch mahogany, for the purpose of setting smaller dishes on, and sometimes smaller silver ware."

Proceeding to describe the interior of the sideboard itself, Sheraton says: "The right-hand drawer, as in common, contains the cellarette, which is often made to draw out separate from the rest. It is partitioned, and lined with lead, to hold nine or ten wine bottles" (see Fig. 9).

"The drawer on the left is usually plain, but sometimes divided into two; the back division being lined with baize to hold plates, having a cover hinged to enclose the whole. The front division is lined with lead, so that it may hold water to wash glasses; which may be made to take out or have a plug-hole to let off the dirty water. This left-hand drawer is, however, sometimes made very short to give place to a pot-cupboard behind, which opens by a door at the end of the sideboard. This door is made to hide itself in the end rail as much as possible, both for look and secrecy. For which reason a turn-buckle is not used, but a thumb-spring, which catches at the bottom of the door, and has a communication through the rail, so that by a touch of the finger the door flies open, owing to the existence of a common spring fixed to the rabbet, which the door falls against.

"In spacious dining-rooms the sideboards are often made without drawers of any sort, having simply a rail a little ornamented, and pedestals with vases at each end, which produce a grand effect." Sideboards of this last-named type are described and illustrated in my chapter on "Heppelwhite." Sheraton continues: "There are other sideboards for small dining-rooms, made without either drawers or pedestals; but have generally a wine-cooler to stand under them, hooped with brass, partitioned and lined with lead, for wine bottles, the same as the above-mentioned cellarette drawers."

In reading through the foregoing description we cannot fail to be impressed by the exhaustive thoroughness with which Sheraton went into matters of the most minute detail; and, while striving to produce furniture that would give satisfaction to the eye in every respect, held, at the same time,

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| Fig. 1. | See — |
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that considerations of utility were of paramount importance. He recognised that the sideboard had to be looked at, and therefore he rendered it as presentable as possible; but he constantly bore in mind the fact that, after all, its appearance was, strictly speaking, but a minor consideration, so he worked accordingly.

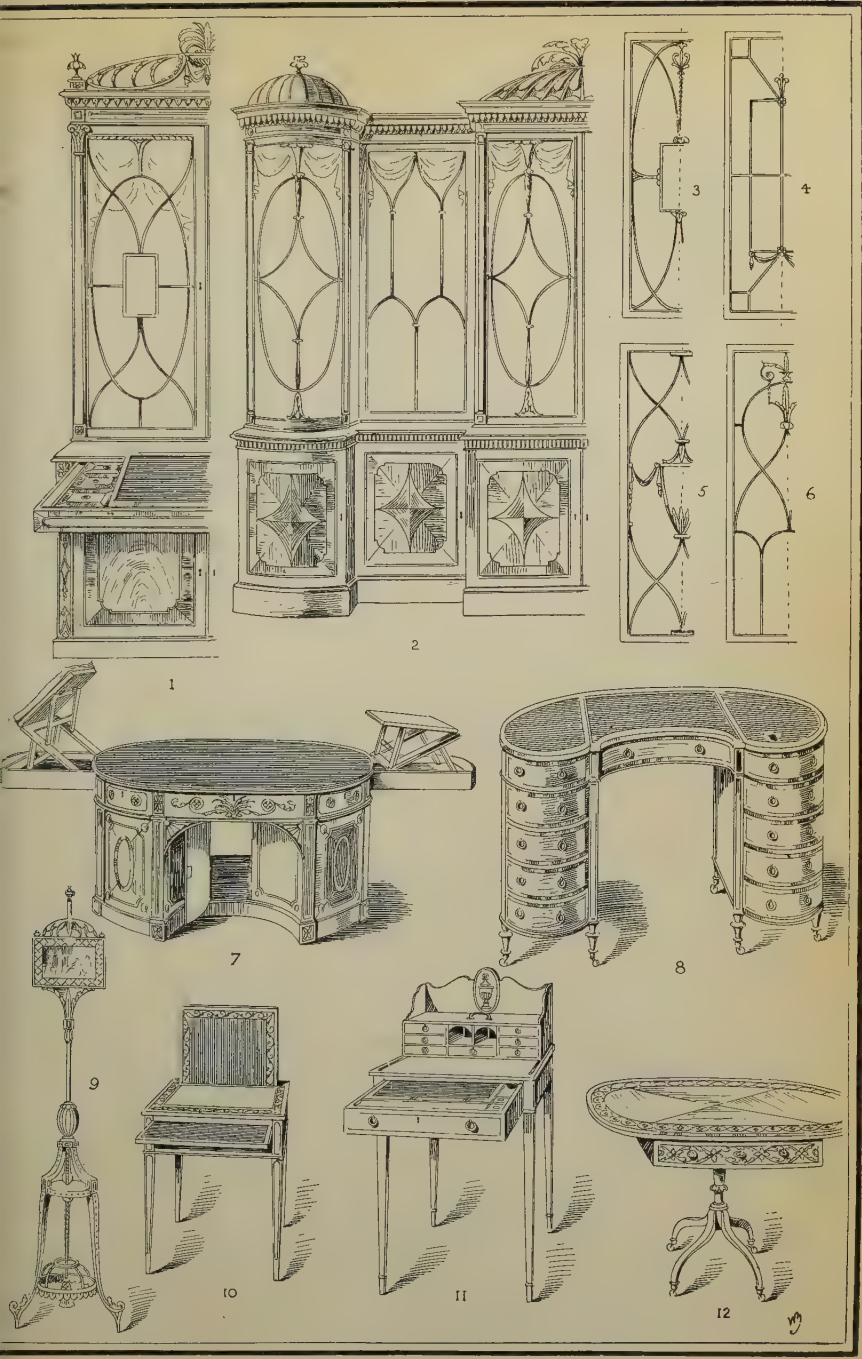
The reception of the smaller plate, the temporary storage and cooling of wine bottles, baize-lined asylums for the safe keeping of plates, etc., etc., had to be provided for before anything else was thought of; and though, like Heppelwhite, this designer aimed at combining elegance and utility in all his productions, it is impossible, after studying all his works, not to come to the conclusion that he regarded the latter as more indispensable than the former, though neither was by any means, or under any circumstances, neglected.

That he always had the complete effect in view, I need hardly say, and he was particular that it should not be interfered with more than was absolutely necessary even by essential details of construction, as, for example, in arranging the cupboard door "to hide itself in the end as much as possible, both for look and secrecy," and in the substitution of the almost imperceptible thumb-spring for the more apparent and equally effectual turn-buckle. These are small, and, maybe, in the eyes of some people, insignificant points, but in the observation of them reposes the secret of much of Sheraton's greatness. Furthermore, inasmuch as the sideboard often constituted a sort of domestic altar for the display of family plate, it seemed to this designer entitled to have a set illumination of its own, to "bring out" to full advantage the charms of the silver proudly arranged upon it. Hence he provided the brass branches for the reception of candles—as perfect a means of artificial lighting as has yet been found, notwithstanding their disadvantages. These branches were made as decorative as circumstances would permit. And so we might continue to discuss detail after detail, but I imagine

that the reader will already have come to the conclusion with regard to these productions that, taking them all in all, anyone who set himself to improve upon genuine "Sheraton," either in regard to general convenience or elegance, would have a hard task. Many have tried, but few have succeeded.

We see, then, that by the time this designer had done with it, the sideboard—as distinct from the older "side-table," with its attendant pedestals and vases, which produced such a "grand effect"—had become firmly established in the British home as an indispensable item in the dining-room, and from that day forward continued to grow in dimensions—though certainly not in grace!—until it assumed proportions altogether and unwarrantably unwieldy.

We will take "Sheraton" bookcases next; and it must be noted that this designer paid very considerable attention to the development of these articles, some capital types of which are illustrated on Plates IV. and V. In writing of these, I may point out, in the first place, that here again we find the same regard—remarked upon earlier in the chapter—paid to that cardinal principle of decorative art which dictates that ornament should be subordinated to construction—a principle Sheraton never intentionally violated. Of Fig. 5, Plate IV., a typical example, the designer says: "The use of this piece is to hold books in the upper part, and in the lower it contains a writing-drawer and clothes-press shelves. The design is intended to be executed in satinwood, and the ornaments japanned. It may, however, be done in mahogany, and, in place of the ornaments in the friezes, flutes may be substituted. The pediment is simply a segment of a circle, and it may end in the form of a fan, with leaves in the centre. The vases may be omitted to reduce the work; but, if they are introduced, the pedestal on which the centre vase rests is merely a piece of thin wood, with a necking and base moulding mitred round and planted on the pediment. The pilasters on the bookcase doors are planted on the frame, and the doors

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| Fig. 1. | See 179, 184, 186, 187 |
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| Fig. 8. | See 184 |
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hinged as usual. The tops of the pilasters are made to imitate the Ionic capital."

Were we disposed to adopt a hypercritical attitude, some slight exception might be taken to this sham construction—that is to say, to the "planting-on" of what should really be constructive details—but the deceit is really so very harmless in every respect, and the construction underlying it all is so honest and genuine, that we are inclined to withhold condemnation. Where such a course is pursued in order to hide faulty material, or scamped workmanship, the case is altogether different; but an act like that would never have been condoned by Sheraton, who preferred to follow in the footsteps of the traditional builders of Milan Cathedral, rather than to emulate the example of those responsible for the erection of that famous church in the States which was described as "'Queen-Anne' in front, and 'Mary-Ann' behind."

To give Sheraton's detailed description of all the pieces illustrated here would occupy far too great space, and would be to little purpose, for most of the particulars given are of greater interest to the manufacturer than to the student, collector, or connoisseur, consisting as they do of technical details regarding construction. Those who desire to refer to them can easily turn to the original book, or to the facsimile reproduction of it, one or the other of which is available at most public libraries, as well as in not a few private ones.

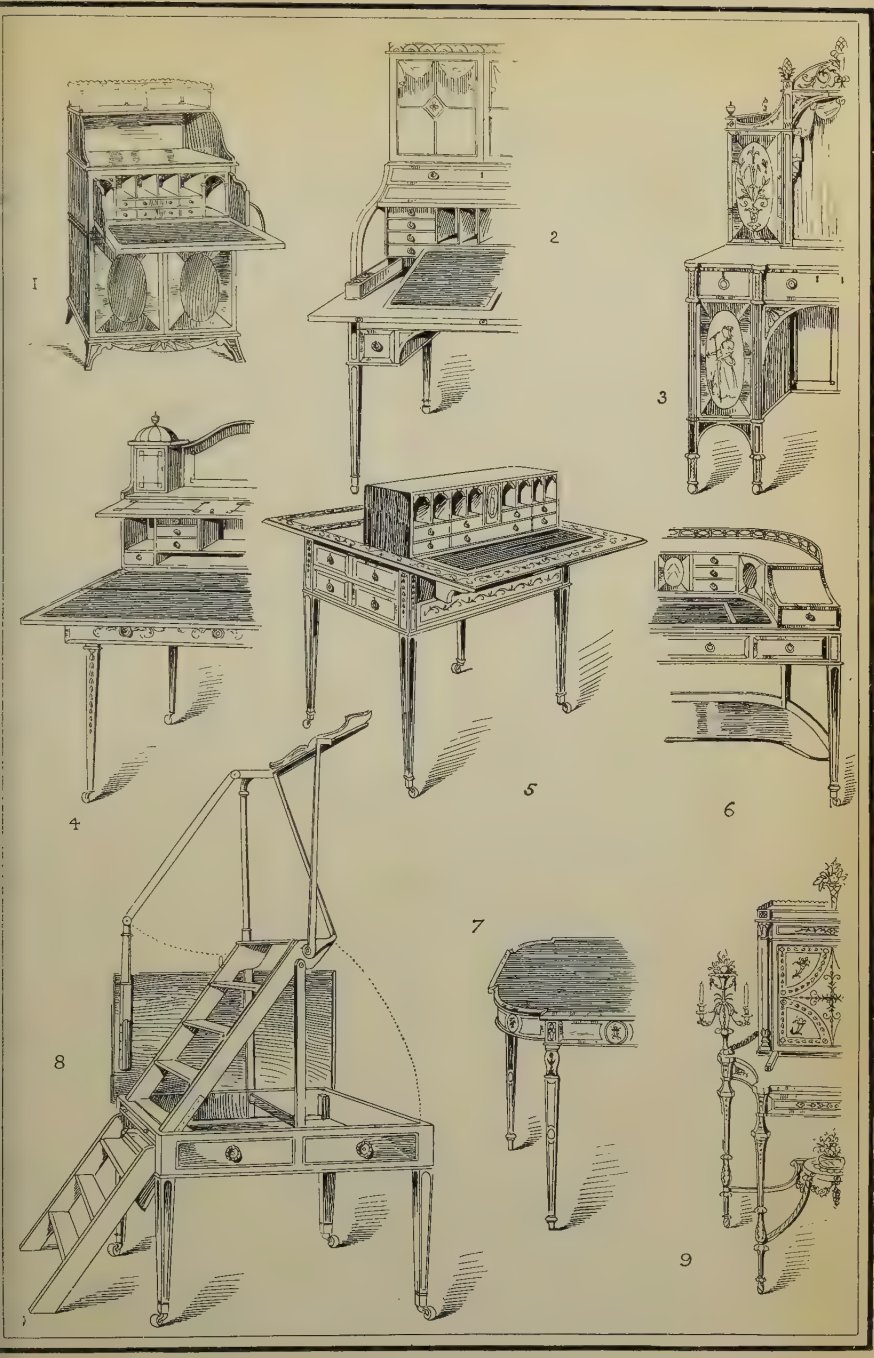
Reference to Figs. 6 and 7, Plate IV.; and to Fig. 1, Plate V., will show more fully still how fond Sheraton was of employing the vase as a finial in his pediments.

Turning to another important phase of this master's work, which we must consider at some length, we will examine one or two examples of what may be described as "Sheraton Inventive Furniture," and this is really worthy of more than passing notice on account of the fact that it is endowed with

something more than grace of design and the average measure of usefulness to command the attention of the student. The exhaustive knowledge of geometry and perspective possessed by this craftsman—and it is in the light of a craftsman that we must now regard him for a moment—his love of mechanics, and never-failing regard for utility, led him to conceive, and work out, problems in cabinet construction such as had never before been attempted, or even dreamed of, by any other member of his craft. The solution of these problems resulted in the origination, and production, of household gods in which all manner of unexpected developments were most ingeniously provided, and which, in most cases, were of real practical utility, and exceptionally clever in conception and execution.

A better instance, perhaps, could not be cited to illustrate the lengths to which he was prepared to go in this direction than the one depicted in Fig. 8, Plate VI. Here we have a table apparently innocent of all complications, but which, by the raising of the hinged top and adjustment of the interior, can be almost instantaneously converted into something totally and altogether different—viz., library steps with hand-rail and book-rest complete—the least relationship between which and a table could hardly be imagined to exist. The step-chair is familiar enough to us, but this step-table, though designed and made over a century ago, will, I imagine, be a novelty to most of my readers.

To quote full particulars here as to the mechanism of this device—and it is really simple—is quite impracticable; but the following extract from Sheraton's description may be given: "This design was taken from steps made by Mr. Campbell, upholsterer to the Prince of Wales. They were first made for the king, and highly approved by him, as every way answering the intended purpose. There are other kinds of library steps which I have seen, made by other persons, but, in my opinion, these must have the

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decided preference both as to simplicity and firmness when they are set up. The steps may be put up in half-a-minute, and the whole may be taken down and enclosed within the table frame in about the same time. The table, when enclosed, serves as a library table, and has a rising flap, supported by a horse, to write on."

At the first glance, this piece might hastily be pronounced a useless example of extravagant eccentricity, but a more careful examination will show that it is nothing of the sort. The design and construction of the whole thing are dominated by sterling common sense. The same idea was worked out by Sheraton in a smaller form, in connection with his "Pembroke" tables, "which," he says, "are considerably more simple than those already described; and, although not so generally useful, will come vastly cheaper."

We have still more inventive furniture on Plate VI., where, among similar novelties, we find, in Fig. 5, another most ingenious contrivance described as a "Harlequin Table," which "serves not only as a breakfast but also as a writing-table, very suitable for a lady." Sheraton gives a reason for the description applied to this piece by explaining: "It is termed a 'Harlequin Table' for no other reason but because, in exhibitions of that sort, there is generally a great deal of machinery introduced in the scenery." In view of the meagreness of this explanation, and judging by the knowledge we possess of the strict religious views held by Sheraton, it is fair to assume that this "methodist preacher, worn-out, with threadbare coat," had probably never witnessed a pantomime, and was, therefore, ignorant of the fact that, in the Harlequinade, the principal figure, from which that extravagance takes its name, usually makes his appearance by shooting up through a trap-door in the centre of the stage, as does the nest of drawers and "pigeon holes" in the table in question when opened. Hence the name, of course.

By a clever arrangement, these drawers, etc., were made

to rise or disappear automatically at will; sinking into the well beneath when not required for writing purposes, and so leaving the space free for breakfast, or any other object which a table serves. In the making-up of this article, Sheraton preferred to use mahogany, relieved by enrichment of inlay of flowing floral design, executed in variously-coloured woods.

Further practical demonstrations of this designer's rare ingenuity are illustrated in the lady's writing-table, Fig. 4, Plate IV.; and a simpler piece for the same purpose, Fig. 10, Plate V.; the study, or library, writing-table, Fig. 7, Plate V.; dressing-table, Fig. 3. Plate VII.; dressing-chest, Fig. 1, Plate VII.; and drawing-table, Fig. 2, Plate IX.

Of Fig. 4, Plate IV.—admittedly "after the French"—Sheraton says: "The convenience of this table is, that a lady, when writing at it, may receive both the benefit of the fire, and have her face screened from its scorching heat. The style of finishing them is neat and rather elegant. They are frequently made of satinwood, cross-banded, japanned, and the top lined with green leather. . . . Observe, that in the side boxes the ink-drawer is on the right, and the pen-drawer on the left. These both fly out of themselves, by the force of a common spring, when the knob on which the candle branch is fixed is pressed. . . . Observe a patera" (a circular piece of wood) "in the centre of the back, amidst the ornament. This patera communicates to a spring . . . which keeps down the screen . . . and by touching . . . the spring is relieved, and weights send up the screen. . . . There is a drawer under the top, which extends the whole of the space between the legs." The rest of the description is purely technical. The small "screen-table," Fig. 10, Plate V., is a simpler application of the same contrivance as regards the screen, which is so fitted that, when down, its presence is not apparent, the top edge of the frame forming part of the design which enriches the table top itself.

Figure 7, Plate V., is a library table, with a drawer at each

end containing adjustable book rests—a capital arrangement; while the little dressing-table, Fig. 3, Plate VII., with its adjustable glass in the centre, jewel boxes, drawer, and writing slide, is very similar in many respects to one shown in Heppelwhite's book, and upon which I have already commented. As will be seen, the whole of the toilet arrangements can be enclosed, when not required for use, by shutting the hinged top. In Fig. 1, Plate VII., we have a "lady's dressing commode," which, as will be evident, has provision for all the operations associated with the toilet. "The top which covers and encloses the dressing part" (when shut) "slides down behind"—much in the same manner as do the screens already referred to.

Finally, so far as this inventive furniture is concerned, we will glance at the "drawing-table," Fig. 2, Plate IX. What a blessing such an article as this must ever be to the professional draughtsman; or, indeed, to anyone artistically inclined. The proofs which Sheraton gave of rare ingenuity are by no means exhausted by these examples; indications of it will be found, in one corner or another, in almost every piece of cabinet work he designed, but those we have now been able to study will suffice to convey a good idea of this phase of his work.

While on this subject, I may perhaps mention an incident which I witnessed some time ago at an exhibition of furniture. A toilet-table was shown by a large firm of manufacturers, the special feature of which was a clever arrangement of concealed and adjustable mirrors, exciting the unstinted admiration and envy of all feminine beholders. Enquirers were assured that it was "quite a novelty; and *our own exclusive patent*, madam." As a matter of fact, the whole device came from the brain of Sheraton over a century ago, and was made up by him. Poor old Sheraton! Probably the profits on that alone, had he been able to make it *his* own "exclusive patent," might have paid for a few extra cups and saucers, so

that, when he entertained visitors, his wife might have had something better than that little porringer.

The "kidney-table," so denominated by reason of the fact that "it resembles in form that intestine part of animals so called," must also come under the heading "Inventive Furniture," for the centre part is arranged to slide forward, and has a rising flap adjustable to almost any angle, "to answer the requirements of writing, or reading, or drawing." The whole of the mechanical arrangements are in this case, again, skilfully concealed when the table is closed, and occupy but a very small space in the interior. The "kidney" form is a most convenient one for writing at, as the two ends of the top, and the side drawers in the pedestals, are situated within easy reach.

Returning to productions in which mechanical ingenuity plays only a minor part—if any part at all—we will now deal with another piece of furniture designed to answer the requirements of the literarily inclined, that is to say, the "bureau bookcase," "escritoire," "secrétaire," or "secretary" as Sheraton preferred to call it. This designer does not appear, so far as we can judge, to have thought much of the simple, and even then old-fashioned, but nevertheless popular, bureau-bookcase form, which was so great a favourite with Heppelwhite and with Chippendale before him; he did not deign to illustrate a single example of that particular type in his book, though doubtless many were made to his instructions. Possibly he deemed it too commonplace for one whose desire was that all his work should be marked by originality. Be the reason what it may, he confined his attention almost without exception—that is to say, so far as the illustrations in his book went—to much more elaborate creations, such as Figs. 5 and 6, Plate IV.; and Fig. 1, Plate V.

This complete disregard of a particular type which was so eminently useful in itself, and comparatively inexpensive

so far as cost of manufacture was concerned, is a curious and interesting point; and one, withal, that should not be lost sight of, if only for the reason that it marks most distinctly another direction in which a line may be drawn between true "Heppelwhite" and "Sheraton."

In addition to his more ambitious "secretarys," for serious work, this designer, as has already been indicated, devoted considerable attention to the provision of smaller, and altogether daintier, articles, designed for the use of ladies wishing to transact their correspondence with some measure of privacy and comfort; and we will now notice one or two of these.

Figure 11, Plate V., is a compact and graceful little writing-table, "made for the convenience of moving from one room to another"; a handle is therefore duly provided on the upper shelf, as shown in the drawing. In the door is a slider to write on, and on the right hand of it ink, sand" (blotting paper was not common then), "and pens."

Figure 1, Plate VI., represents a "lady's secretary," to be made in "black rosewood and tulip cross-banding, together with brass mouldings, which produce a fine effect. The upper shelf is intended to be marble, supported with brass pillars, and a brass ornamental rim round the top. The lower part may be fitted up in drawers on one side, and the other with a shelf to hold a lady's hat." More thought for the wants of the women folk!

The "cylinder desk and bookcase," Fig. 2, Plate VI., is rather more ambitious in character, and is not dedicated to the fair sex, though I think that Sheraton must have had the boudoir or drawing-room in mind when he designed it, for it was to be "made of satinwood, cross banded, and varnished . . . green silk fluting behind the glass . . . drapery put on at the top, . . . the ornament in the diamond part" (in the centre of the doors) "to be carved and gilt, laid on to some sort of silk ground. . . . The rim round the top . . . to be brass."

Space will not permit me to illustrate more than three other examples of this type. The first of these is the "lady's cabinet and writing-table," Fig. 4, Plate VI., which is a light and graceful article, replete with handy conveniences for the reception of stationery, papers, small books, and the like. Fig. 3, on the same plate, is "a cabinet . . . to accommodate a lady with conveniences for writing and reading and holding her trinkets and other articles of that kind;" and is to be "veneered with the finest satinwood;" and Fig. 9 is another "cabinet," the front of the upper part of which falls down to furnish a surface for writing purposes. Sheraton is careful to point out that "the flower-pot at the top and that on the stretcher are supposed to be real, not carved. . . . The candle branches turn to any form in a socket, and the whole may be taken away, as they are only screwed into a nut fixed into the legs of the table." Fig. 6 is a library table that calls for no explanation; and Fig. 7 a simple and most graceful card-table, to be made in mahogany, inlaid or japanned, and carved.

Reverting, for a moment or two, to bookcases, a word must now be said on the subject of traceried doors, and we must endeavour, if possible, to determine finally the respects in which those of Sheraton differ from the traceries of Heppelwhite, and decide by what details or characteristics one may be distinguished from the other. Typical "Sheraton" traceries are shown in Figs. 5, 6, and 7, Plate IV., and in Figs. 1 and 2, and, to an enlarged scale, in Figs. 3, 4, 5, 6, Plate V. These traceries, as I have previously pointed out, were most usually carried out in mahogany or in satinwood, but brass, lacquered or painted, was not infrequently, and with excellent effect, introduced in place of wood. Similar traceries were, of course, employed in carcase work other than bookcases, but not very often.

In my chapter on "Heppelwhite," I have emphasised the fact that a certain amount of similarity exists between the

door traceries in that style, and those of the style we are now considering; but, at the same time, I have explained that, in most cases, the former are more angular in feeling and detail than the latter. A comparison of those illustrated in this book, as representative of the respective styles, will make this difference perfectly clear. It may be well to draw attention, also, to the fact that Sheraton favoured the oval greatly as a centre-piece, and was fond of introducing the vase and the "Prince of Wales's Feathers," with other detail, in connection with it.

Another most important feature by which "Sheraton" may be distinguished from "Heppelwhite," and which gives the originator of the former the greater claim to superiority, is the pediment, when it is present, in the larger and more pretentious cabinet work. We have studied Heppelwhite's ideas concerning the forms which this should take, and have come, I think, to the conclusion that, in that respect at least, he has been found sadly wanting. It is not necessary for me to recapitulate what I have already written upon that point; but I may remind my readers that the "Heppelwhite" pediment is almost invariably "finikin" and fragile in appearance as well as in fact, and quite unworthy to occupy a place on most of the structures which it surmounts. We have remarked that the design, in nine cases out of ten, was far more suitable for being rendered in painting, or marquetry, than in pierced carving — the medium usually adopted.

The "Sheraton" pediments, however, are vastly different, and infinitely better, though, it must be admitted, that their designer did err occasionally, but only very slightly, in the direction specified. For example, some of the vases, swags, leafage, and scroll-work on the pediments of Figs. 5, 6, and 7, Plate IV.; and Figs. 1 and 2, Plate V.; are not above this reproach; but it must be observed that none of them is so fragile or filigree-like as are most of those

of Heppelwhite. What delicate details exist are, with but very few exceptions, sustained by stronger ones, their association with which conveys an impression of security. But we can see plainly that this designer did not at all approve of the "wiry" pediment, though he did indulge in it occasionally in deference to prevailing demands. As regards this member, we find him at his best in the suggestions that appear in Figs. 9, 10, and 11, Plate VII.

These are well conceived, admirably proportioned, and extremely graceful in line; and the appearance of delicacy and lightness is cleverly attained without the slightest sacrifice of security or strength. The first of the three, it is true, is pierced right through, but the wood in which the piercing has been executed is of sufficient thickness to support that operation without giving rise to any fear of disastrous results. To sum up briefly the pediments peculiar to the three styles we have before us — "Chippendale," "Heppelwhite," and "Sheraton." The first were based on good old "Classic" lines, and, though graceful, were somewhat heavy in appearance; the second went to the other extreme, and looked almost as if the least shaking would bring them down on our heads, or a puff of wind would blow them away; while the last attained the happy medium, combining the three desired qualities—strength, lightness, and grace.

The fire screen was another article that commenced to win popularity in this country earlier in the century, and the favour which it enjoyed was unquestionably partly due to the efforts of Chippendale, who paid considerable attention to its design, and presented it in many attractive and pleasing guises. It took two principal forms. First there was the "banner" or "pole" screen—a comparatively small piece of textile fabric, framed in with wood or metal, and decoratively supported by a swing "arm" of brass, or mounted on an upright pillar or standard. Then came the "horse" screen, a

larger panel of silk, tapestry, or some other material, in a wooden frame, and supported by "claw" or other feet.

Of the first variety we have a graceful example in Fig. 3, Plate IV., styled by Sheraton a "tripod screen"; another, of a similar type, appears in Fig. 9, Plate V. The latter was intended for "finishing in white and gold, and the other was to be made in mahogany, or japanned." Writing of these screens as a class, the designer explains: "The rods . . . are all supposed to have a hole through them, and a pulley let in near the top on which the line passes, and a weight being enclosed in the tassel, the screen is balanced to any height. . . . Such screens as have very fine prints, or worked satin, commonly have a glass before them. In which case a frame is made, with a rabbet to receive the glass, and another to receive the straining frame, to prevent it from breaking the glass; and to enclose the straining frame a bead is mitred round."

The "pole" or "tripod" screen has its advantages where it is desired to protect the face alone from the heat of the fire, which works havoc with the best of complexions, and is furthermore far from beneficial to the eyes; but to shield the body as well something further is required. This is furnished by the "horse" screen, and we will now take a glance at Sheraton's rendering of that article.

He did not illustrate many, which is rather surprising when we remember how prolific in their production were the French cabinet makers of the "Louis-Seize," the style so beloved of Sheraton; but a typical model of one of those that he did show appears in Fig. 2, Plate VII. This is, I need hardly say, "after the French manner," and it was intended that the panel should be filled with embroidered silk. Another form of "horse" screen, introduced by this maker himself, was supported in the centre by a "tripod," instead of at the sides as shown on Plate VII.; it was so constructed that the upper part turned on a swivel, so that it might be put at any angle without moving the whole.

Figure 13, Plate VII., is not a screen, though at the first glance at the illustration it might be taken for one; it is a "horse" dressing-glass (the term "cheval glass" is more commonly employed nowadays) provided with a handy attachment on each side for the reception of the innumerable odds-and-ends of the dressing-table which are inseparable from the feminine toilet. The glass in this case is made to rise and fall, being balanced by leaden weights ingeniously concealed in the side standards. The description given is as follows: "There is a brass handle behind the ornamented top to raise the glass by. The boxes on each side are intended to hold conveniences for dressing. On these there is a comb tray on the left side, and a pin-cushion on the right. When the dressing-boxes are not in use, they are intended to turn behind the glass. For this purpose they are fixed to a brass socket, which turns upon a short brass rod, and by a screw they may be raised up or lowered at pleasure."

What a true delight this master took in the invention and provision of these little "conveniences," and especially of those intended to increase the comfort of the gentler sex; and how acceptable they must have been to his patrons, particularly to the fashionable dames and demoiselles of that period when toilet and dress were matters of paramount importance, and paint, powder, and patches were the order of the day. It is easy to see, by the character of these cunning devices, that they came from the brain of a married man; but how many of them, I wonder, were ever even seen—much less used—by the poor partner of the joys and sorrows of their inventor? It is to be feared that few of them came the way of that poor struggling soul.

While in the domain of the toilet, it behoves us to see what manner of bedstead Sheraton was wont to provide for those who favoured him with their patronage. We will first examine the three characteristic pillars which appear in Figs. 6, 7, and 8, Plate VII. The reader will do well to study

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| Fig. 1. | See 182, 183 | Fig. 5. | See 155, 192 | Fig. 9. | See 188, 190 |
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| ,, 3. | ,, 152, 182, 183 | ,, 7. | ,, 155, 190, 191 | ,, 12. | ,, 195 |
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these in conjunction with those designed by Heppelwhite and Chippendale, but more particularly by the former (see "Heppelwhite," Figs. 9, 10, 11, and 13, Plate VII.) in order that the marked differences pointed out in preceding pages may be thoroughly understood and fully appreciated.

In the last chapter I have laid special stress upon the fact that, in the treatment of the bed-pillar, the designs of Heppelwhite were, in almost every instance, much less ornate than those of Sheraton, greater reliance being placed by the earlier designer upon graceful proportion and the careful disposition of the various "members" of the turning, than upon elaboration of rich detail, either carved or inlaid; and a comparison of the two sets of designs specified will prove the correctness of this statement. The pillar shown in Fig. 6 is for a "rich state bed . . . carved in white and gold"; while the instructions concerning Figs. 7 and 8 were that they were "to be painted." The probability is, however, that if the designs were ever carried out, and possibly they were, plain mahogany was employed, simply carved, and without any other enrichment, such as painting, gilding, or marquetry. They, indeed, were not required. I am fully aware of the fact that the days of the old "four poster" have long since passed away; but some, though not many, of these old examples remain to us, though they are seldom to be met with in their entirety. In most cases they have been "cut down," as previously explained, in order that the pillars might be converted into decorative supports for the display of busts, statuettes, etc., or for the reception of lamps or candles, purposes which they serve exceedingly well, whether regarded from the utilitarian or decorative point of view.

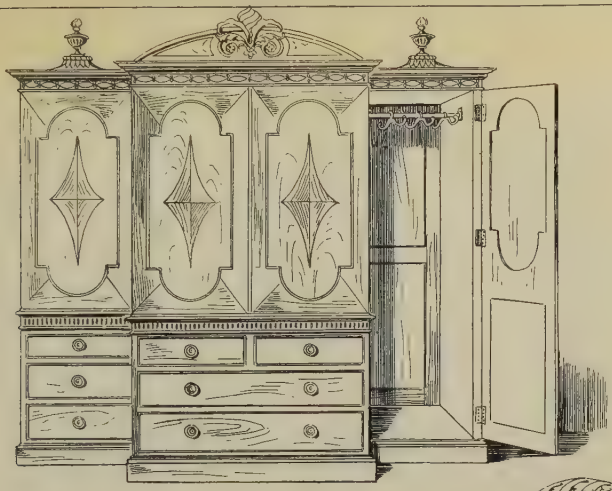
In these three pillars it will be remarked that Sheraton was not disposed to let simple turning tell its own tale when circumstances permitted its embellishment by means of carving, gilding, or painting. Plain surfaces, instead of possessing a beauty of their own in his eyes, were regarded

simply as opportunities for enrichment of some kind or another.

It is clear that, about this time, the "four-poster" had "caught the decline," and was destined to give way before very long to structures of a less cumbersome, and certainly more healthy, description. This fact was fully recognised by Sheraton, and he made all preparations to be ready for the coming change in public taste. One alternative to the older type he provides by the design which is reproduced in Fig. 5, Plate VII., and which is "Louis-Seize" in every particular, even to the pattern of the silken covering. Another will be found in Fig. 4 on the same plate. These two are described as "sofa beds"; and though the first closely resembles the ordinary wooden bedstead so far as general form is concerned, the second is certainly nothing more nor less than a glorified sofa, and could hardly be honestly recommended with any degree of confidence to our friends if a comfortable night's repose were the end in view. The attempt to introduce such articles into common use was nevertheless made, and so must of necessity be recorded here.

Of Fig. 5 Sheraton wrote: "The frames are sometimes painted in ornaments to suit the furniture. But when the furniture is of rich silk they are done in white and gold and the ornaments carved. The drapery under the cornice is of the French kind, it is fringed all round, and laps on to each other like waves."

Finally, as regards what may strictly be described as bedroom furniture, Fig. 1, Plate VIII., should be particularly noted, as it marks a most notable development in the arrangement of the wardrobe; one that has been perpetuated to the present time, and constitutes, as a matter of fact, the leading feature of that article of furniture as we know it to-day—that is to say, the "hanging cupboard." We do not find it in Heppelwhite's Book, and even Sheraton, as we see, introduced it rather as



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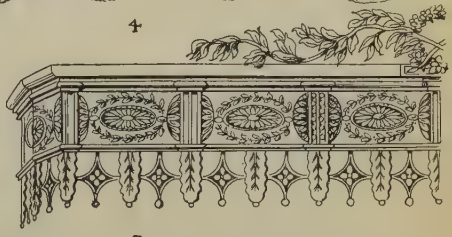

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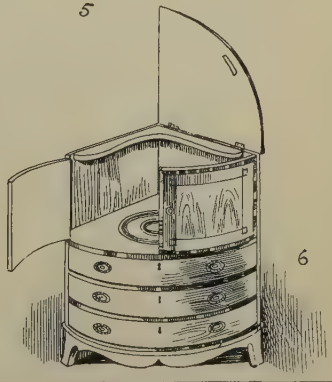

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| Fig. 1. | See 192 | Figs. 4, 5. | See 195 |
| ,, 2, 3. | ,, 195, 196 | ,, 6. | ,, 194 |

an experiment than anything else, fitting up the major portion of the upper part of his wardrobes with sliding shelves, as was then the accepted custom. The hooks provided are not of the ordinary type, but are double ones, working on a swivel, and depending from a wooden rod, the ends of which fall into metal sockets fitted into the sides of the cupboard to receive them. These rods may be removed at will. This arrangement has been improved upon since by the introduction of swing "arms" and other arrangements, but it was quite a fresh innovation at the time of which I am writing.

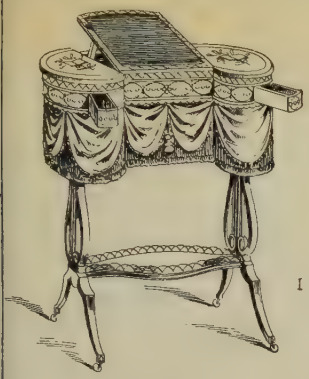
It will doubtless have been observed that most of the "Sheraton" bedroom furniture with which we have, up to the present, dealt belongs to the more costly description; and that it should be so could hardly be avoided, for more than one reason. These old makers and designers did not include many models of the cheaper class in their books, although of course they provided for their supply when called upon to do so; they preferred rather to rely upon their higher flights of fancy to attract attention to their work, and bring business to their establishments. Though cheap, and probably "nasty," furniture was made in the so-called "good old days," just as it is now, but not, of course, in such large quantities, little of it has survived to the present time; to reproduce any such, therefore, from existing examples is altogether out of the question.

Fortunately for the reputation of those old craftsmen only the fittest of their work has survived; and it is not necessary to say that that fittest was not supplied at what the trade nowadays terms "cutting prices." It was good, honest work, well paid for, and, as a natural consequence, has withstood the ravages of time, as, under ordinary circumstances, good, honest work generally will—unless carried out in fragile or perishable material.

On the other hand, none of the pieces illustrated here would be beyond the means of the fairly "well-to-do," and,

considered as a whole, the types shown are really representative of the furnishings of the average middle-class English home when George the Third was king. There are, however, one or two models of a less costly, and more strictly utilitarian, type—designed more immediately for use than display—which we may consider in passing. They are models possessed of such indisputable advantages that one or two of them still continue to find a place in every well-appointed showroom, and sell quite as readily now as ever they did. Of these we may note the well-designed and sensible convenience for the bedroom portrayed in Fig. 6, Plate VIII.; the capital corner washstand, Fig. 9, Plate IX., of a type cultivated by Heppelwhite and Sheraton alike (see "Heppelwhite," Fig. 2, Plate V.), and of which thousands are still being manufactured; another article of the same description, but on a scale rather more elaborate, Fig. 13, Plate IX.; and the two remaining washstands, Figs. 10 and 14, on the same plate, designed for office use. These are all simple in form, and comparatively inexpensive in character; nevertheless they possess the mark of this particular style so clearly impressed that there is small fear of their being mistaken for anything other than pure "Sheraton."

Returning for a moment to the question of legs, we have noted that, in his chairs, Sheraton showed a decided preference for the round or turned leg, the characteristics of which we have duly studied; but his preference was by no means the same—or, if it was, his designs do not indicate the fact—in the case of tables, sideboards, and other cabinet work requiring some support to raise them from the ground and keep them there. In some few instances of this kind, it is true, he did employ the turned leg, but the square or "thurmed" tapered leg is more generally to be found in this class of article. Sometimes it was quite plain, and even then most graceful; sometimes fluted, and sometimes enriched with carved husks, leafage, and other detail, as illustrated on the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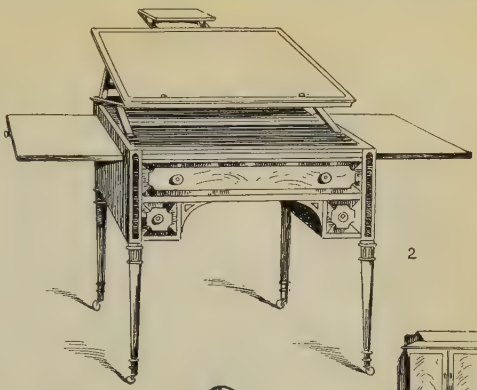
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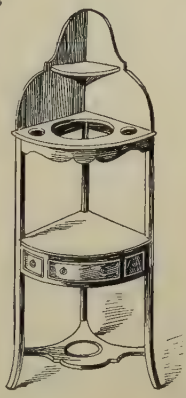
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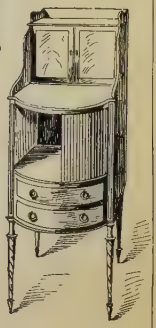
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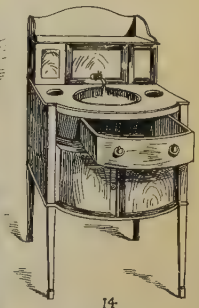
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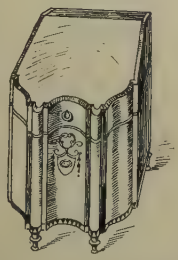
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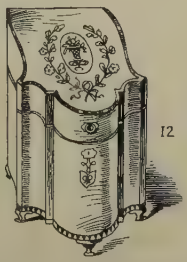
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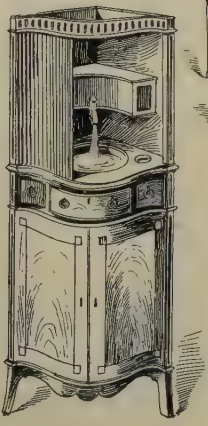
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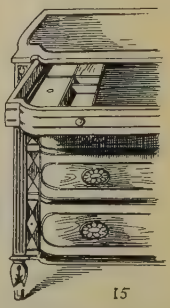
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| Fig. 2. | See 182, 183 | Fig. 9. | See 152, 194 |
| ,, 3–8. | ,, 195 | ,, 10–15. | ,, 194 |

accompanying plates, and, drawn to a larger scale, in Figs. 3, 5, 6, and 7, Plate IX. A careful examination of these will convey far more to the student, in a very brief space of time, than the perusal of many pages of mere descriptive matter could possibly do, and lead to the acquisition of an absolutely accurate knowledge of the detail referred to in all its phases.

I have pointed out earlier in the chapter that the "wiry," finikin class of ornament, indulged in somewhat freely by Heppelwhite, found but small favour in the eyes of Sheraton, notwithstanding the fact that, in his own book, he gave evidence that he was not strong enough to resist altogether the temptation to try his hand occasionally at designing that sort of thing. For an instance of this I may refer to Fig. 12, Plate VII.; but the reader must make special note of the fact that this girandole was designed for execution in *metal*, and not in carved wood or stucco, so there can be no possible objection to it on the score of construction, as there was to not a few of Heppelwhite's creations on similar lines. Care must be taken not to lose sight of this, or much that I have written in favour of the later designer may appear to be devoid of foundation.

The remaining illustrations which call for comment are few in number; they represent merely a couple of clock cases, and two designs for window draperies. About the middle of the eighteenth century the English cabinet maker commenced to turn his attention seriously to the development and beautification of that form of clock case which, in the course of time, and partly through the not always welcome vocalisations of youthful songsters, has come to be known as the "Grandfather's." In the general form of the design of the woodwork, the structural conditions imposed by the clock maker render it impossible to bring about any very great variation, and novelty of effect and grace of line, if they are to be secured, must be attained by the skilful arrangement of more or less unimportant parts and ornamental detail. From its

very shape, however, which cannot be departed from in any essential particular, the case of the "Grandfather's" clock affords splendid opportunities for surface decoration, and it is here that the marquetry cutter and decorative painter are able to demonstrate their skill to the full. To enrich the large spaces of the front by means of carving would prove to be altogether too costly a business, save under the most exceptional circumstances.

This was quite evident to Sheraton, who, when he had conceived as graceful a general form as he could, and introduced as much turning and carving as commercial considerations would permit, filled the panels with the daintiest schemes capable of being rendered in veneers, or by the brush. That he was most successful in this as in other directions is indicated by the two examples portrayed in Figs. 2 and 3, Plate VIII.; the contour and enrichment of both are in every way worthy of the high reputation of their designer. It is impossible to accord them greater praise.

I might continue to illustrate, and comment upon, example after example of "Sheraton"; but ample has been written and shown to convey a complete and absolutely correct impression of what the style under all its aspects really is; and the further multiplication of words and illustrations would serve no good purpose.

I must not, however, leave the consideration of "The Cabinet Maker and Upholsterer's Drawing Book" without brief reference to the first part of that work, upon which I have up to the present commented but little. It was Sheraton's contention that every designer and maker of furniture should possess a thorough knowledge of geometry, perspective, and the "Five Orders"; he, therefore, devoted nearly three hundred pages of his great work to those subjects, discoursing upon them to his heart's content, and, at the same time, lamenting the fact that few of his predecessors had adopted a similar course, and blaming them for not doing so.

But with this section we have little or nothing to do, save to place its existence on record, and regard it as yet one more proof of the rare thoroughness that characterised the operations of this old master in the pursuit of any object that he may have had in view.

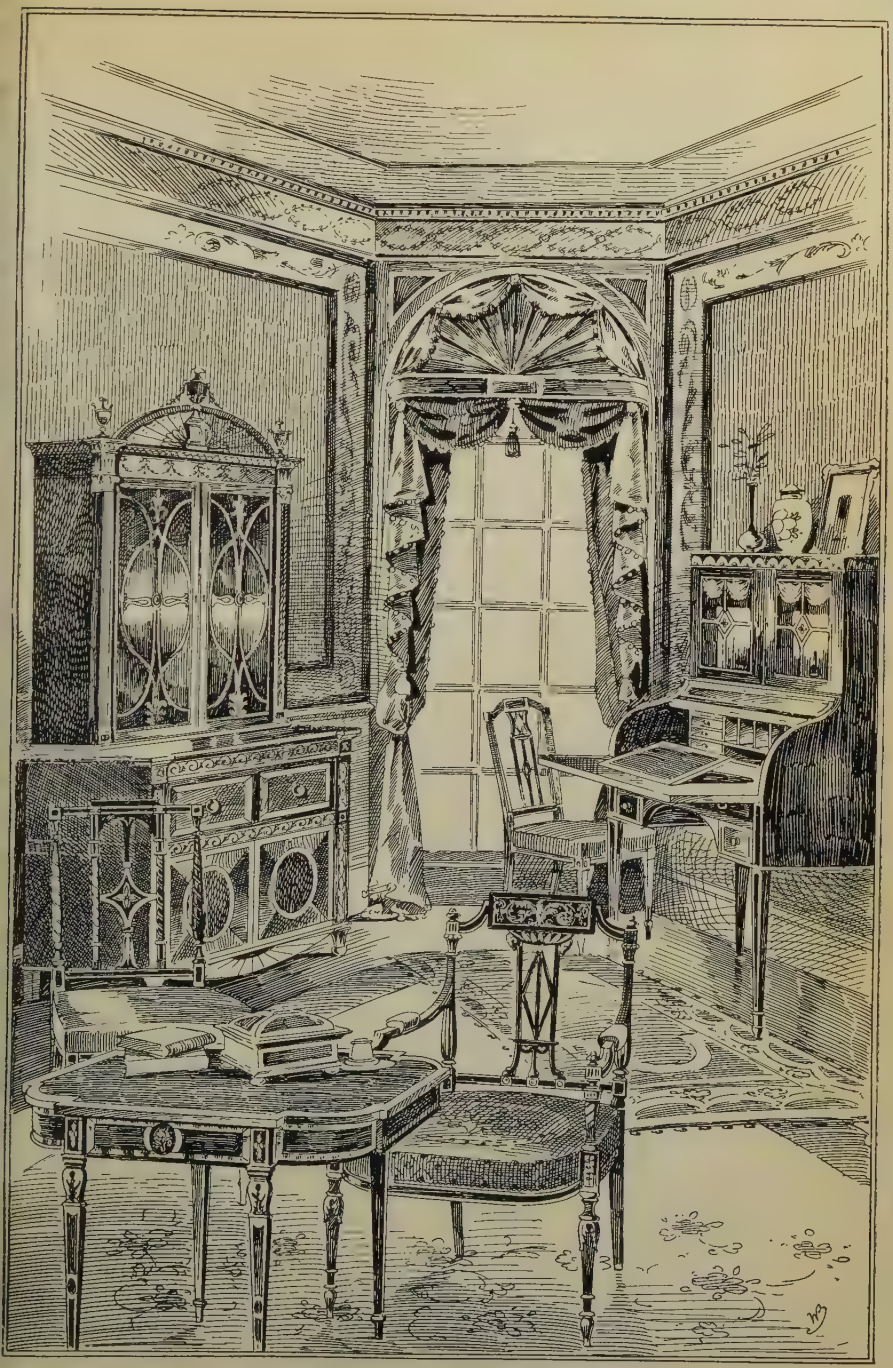
To sum up the style in as few words as possible. The reader will, I think, have come to the conclusion by this time that, in all Sheraton did in connection with the craft he loved so well, there is everything to praise, and little or nothing to call forth unfavourable criticism; and this conclusion is, on the whole, a correct one. It is true that, towards the end of his career, when he was a broken-down old man, worn-out in mind and body alike, he published a series of supplementary plates of designs which make it painfully apparent that, at the time of their publication, the over-wrought brain of this poor old artist, craftsman, preacher, theologian, and publisher had commenced to lose its balance, and the hand its cunning.

These consist, for the most part, of what can only be described as caricatures of the "Empire," which probably never were made up, and, fortunately, are never likely to be. But they must not be counted against him; and, if they were brought up as evidence to counteract the effect of much that I have written, I should, in the capacity of counsel for the defence, put in the plea of "artistically unsound mind, the result of never-ceasing work and anxiety." I should remark, further, that "my client," in a fit of aberration, or may be in response to an order which he dared not refuse, perpetrated a "Prince of Wales's Chinese Drawing-Room," of which, however, he said but little, and we need say less. The only comment, indeed, necessary upon it is, that evidence appears throughout that the designer's heart was not in the work, and that he determined to give as small a flavouring of "Chinese" as possible. As a natural consequence the outcome is necessarily weak; and that is the worst that can be said about it. There are, at all

events, no "Chippendale" extravagances there in the way of Pagoda-cum-Rococo.

We may, therefore, overlook these occasional divergences from the straight path, seeing that we have such overwhelming evidence of previous "good character"; and we may be permitted even to express surprise that, with a brain so phenomenally active, fertile, and imaginative, such lapses were not far more numerous. Their absence proves conclusively that Sheraton did not regard the designing of household furniture as an art which anyone could take up with success on the spur of the moment; he understood that a long and special training was essential. It was here that his early and thorough drilling at the bench stood him in good stead; but that alone did not satisfy him. He determined to master geometry, perspective, drawing, and the principles of design, himself pursuing the same course that he recommended to others. What was the result of it all? Simply that he became an authority in matters appertaining to the beautification of the home whom few in this or any other country have equalled.

Now that we have completed our study of the work of the three greatest eighteenth-century English designers of our household gods—Chippendale, Heppelwhite, and Sheraton—and seen the part which each played in raising our national furniture to the pitch of excellence it had attained when the nineteenth century dawned, let us reconsider briefly the claim put forward, not by one advocate alone, but by many, that the period which elapsed between the years 1750 and 1800 should be regarded as "the Chippendale Period," and that everything produced during that time should come under the one generic title "Chippendale." I hardly think that it is necessary for me to write much more upon that point. Earlier in the book I have protested, with all the emphasis in my power, against the perpetuation of any such absurd and unjust view; but mere protest cannot be of much avail unless supported by ample proof to justify it. I have, there-



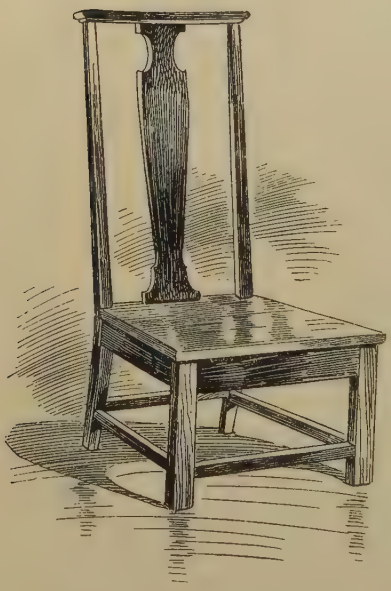
A TYPICAL "SHERATON" INTERIOR

fore, done my best in the last hundred or more plates of illustrations and pages of text to present such justification as shall leave no loophole for those who entertain the opinion that the eighteenth century boasted but one great master of furniture design; that that master was Chippendale; and that all his contemporaries and successors in the craft were but "small fry," of not sufficient importance for their names to be recorded—men who did nothing but sit at the feet of the great "upholder" of St. Martin's Lane, copy his ideas, and remain but humble disciples of the school which he founded.

That is, in brief, the creed of many; a creed whose demolition has been one of my aims in penning these pages, for I believe it to be pernicious and unjustifiable in every respect. A careful examination of the foregoing plates will reveal the fact that, in the work of Chippendale, infractions of the cardinal principles of good construction, the wilful ignoring of the conditions imposed by material, and fantastic extravagance are far too frequent to be ignored by the student. The creations of Heppelwhite and Sheraton, on the other hand, are nearly, if not wholly, free from any such faults. Above all things, let us accord honour freely where honour is due; and let us, at the same time, overlook such faults as were not committed "with malice aforethought." When those faults are repeated again and again, and, further, "gloried in," it is time to draw the line. Chippendale did a vast amount of good work, as well as much that was indefensible, and we have meted out to him full credit for it. But of Heppelwhite and Sheraton it may be said that, in spite of many temptations to transgress in numerous ways, and in spite of the example of their erratic predecessor before them —whose popular success was in a large measure due to his extravagance and eccentricity—they never wearied in well-doing.

# OTHER GEORGEIAN TYPES

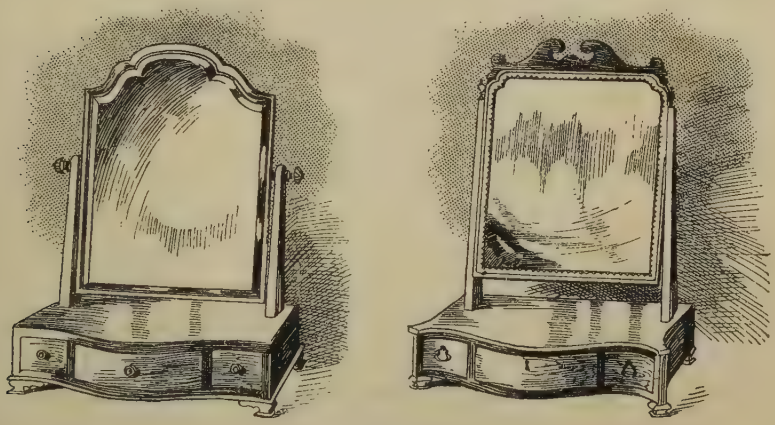
AFTER reading the three preceding chapters, and before dismissing the subject of Georgeian types in order to proceed to the consideration of those which come next on our list, the reader will naturally wonder what was being done during the period with which we have just dealt by designers other than those whose names have been accorded prominence in these pages. It will be readily understood that Chippendale, Heppelwhite, and Sheraton were not by any means the only men employed in designing and making furniture during the time of the Georges, and, on that account, some may assume that other distinct and historic styles may have risen in this country under the earlier rulers of the House of Hanover, and call for our attention; but I may say at once that such is not the case.



EARLY GEORGEIAN CHAIR

(Of the cheaper class, with "Queen-Anne" baluster or "splat" in back)

We must, of course, recognise the fact that all the models which we now classify as "Chippendale," "Heppelwhite," and "Sheraton," were not really the creations of the designers whose names they bear, but were either borrowed by them from contemporary makers—I am not referring now to the French inspiration already discussed at length — or were borrowed in part by contemporary makers from them.



GEORGEIAN TOILET-GLASSES

(Of the "Heppelwhite" or "Sheraton" type in lower part, but revealing "Queen-Anne" influence in the shaping of the tops of mirror frames)

As the three designers of whom I have written so much brought together the scattered fragments of style, so to speak, harmonised them, and included them in their systems, their names have become associated with them, and, doubtless, will continue to be so associated until the end of the story. It would, therefore, serve but little purpose to analyse here, even did space permit, the designs of such men as Ince, Mayhew, Lock, Manwaring, Hope, Johnson, and other contem-

porary cabinet makers and chair makers, which resembled, in a greater or less degree, those we have studied. The names, however, of the men themselves, who helped to attain the end towards which the great trio were working, each in his own way, must needs be placed on record; and a list of their principal publications is given at the end of this chapter for the information and guidance of those who desire to go further into the matter.

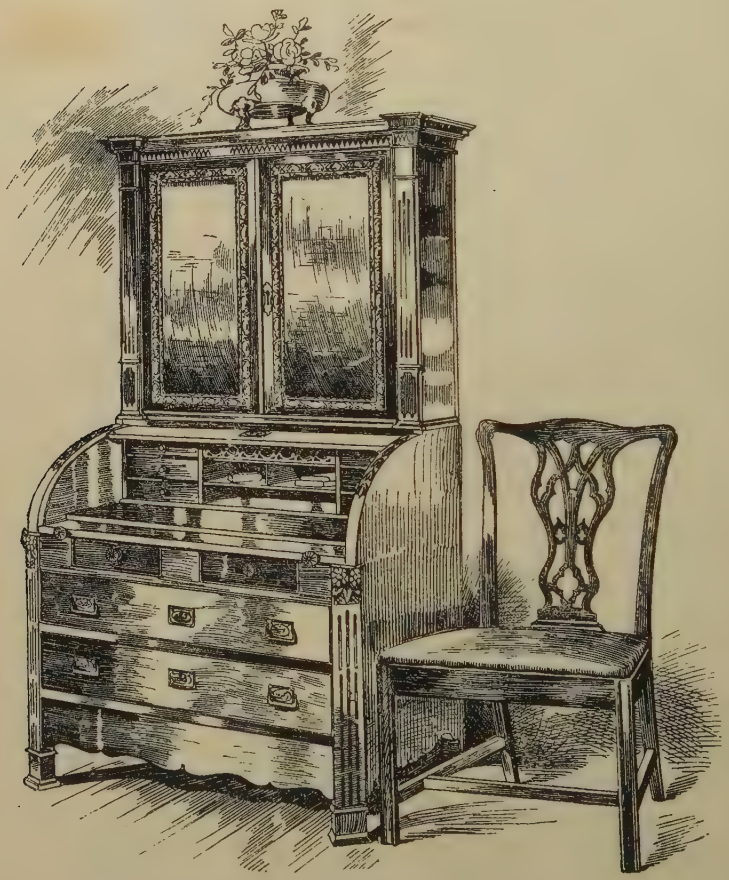
With so many brains active, many variations in style naturally occur, and it is my duty to refer briefly to some of them. As regards classification, we cannot do better than fall back upon the "heads" we already have in our minds. The chair illustrated in Fig. 1, Plate I., is of a type common in the more modest homes of the "Queen-Anne" period, and was, by the way, selected more than once by Hogarth for presentation in his renderings of interiors of the humbler class. It is generally found with the plain wooden seat, with simpler turning in the legs, and sometimes without underframing. The particular example shown looks rather like a more modern rendering of the original, but whether it is so or not I am unable to say with any degree of certainty, not having seen the piece itself. Fig. 2 may be classed either as late "Queen-Anne" or early "Chippendale," for though the frame as a whole is in the former style, the "splat" in the back distinctly heralds the advent of the latter. Precisely the same remark applies to the back, Fig. 6, Plate II. Fig. 3, Plate I., is, of course, "Queen-Anne," and we can fix its date pretty well, as it was the property of the great Hogarth himself; but Fig. 4 carries us on to much later in the century. The arms and lower part of this are to all intents and purposes "Chippendale," but the back has much of the grace, and all the delicacy, of "Heppelwhite." Most probably it was made somewhere between 1770 and 1790, or possibly earlier; the later estimate appears to me to be the more likely. We cannot go far wrong in describ-

ing Figs. 3, 4, 5, and 8, Plate II., as early "Chippendale," for they are unmistakably in that style, though they are not from the pencil of that designer. Fig. 7 I should prefer to regard rather as early or inexpensive "Heppelwhite," if a definite name must be attached to it. Fig. 9 is a rather curious and unusual study, for, while the greater part is "Chippendale," the graceful interlaced "splat" might have been the idea of either Heppelwhite or Sheraton, or of one of their followers. Fig. 1, Plate III., also has the "Heppelwhite" feeling, while I need not say at this stage that Fig. 2 may be definitely and without fear of dispute classified under that heading. Fig. 3 is an exceptional example, of which it is impossible now to obtain the history; but it was evidently specially designed and made for some ceremonial purpose, and dates from about 1770 or 1780, as indicated by the tapered legs and form of the arms. With Fig. 4, and all the types on Plate IV., we come to clearly defined "Chippendale" again, though they are not taken from "The Gentleman's and Cabinet Maker's Director." In Fig. 4 particularly we have a fine example of the clustered turned legs, to which I have previously referred as a characteristic of "Chippendale."

For permission to illustrate the fine old cylinder-fall "secretary" shown overleaf, I am indebted to my brother, Mr. Julius Benn, from whose collection also comes the wall-mirror pictured on Plate II., "Jacobean." This "secretary" was probably made about the middle of the century; while the chair standing by it is, of course, early "Chippendale."

Should an objection be raised on the part of anyone to the description by the names "Chippendale," "Heppelwhite," or "Sheraton" of pieces which do not appear in the published works of the founders of those styles, or whose origin cannot be traced directly to them, the difficulty may easily be surmounted by employing the terms "Early Georgeian" or

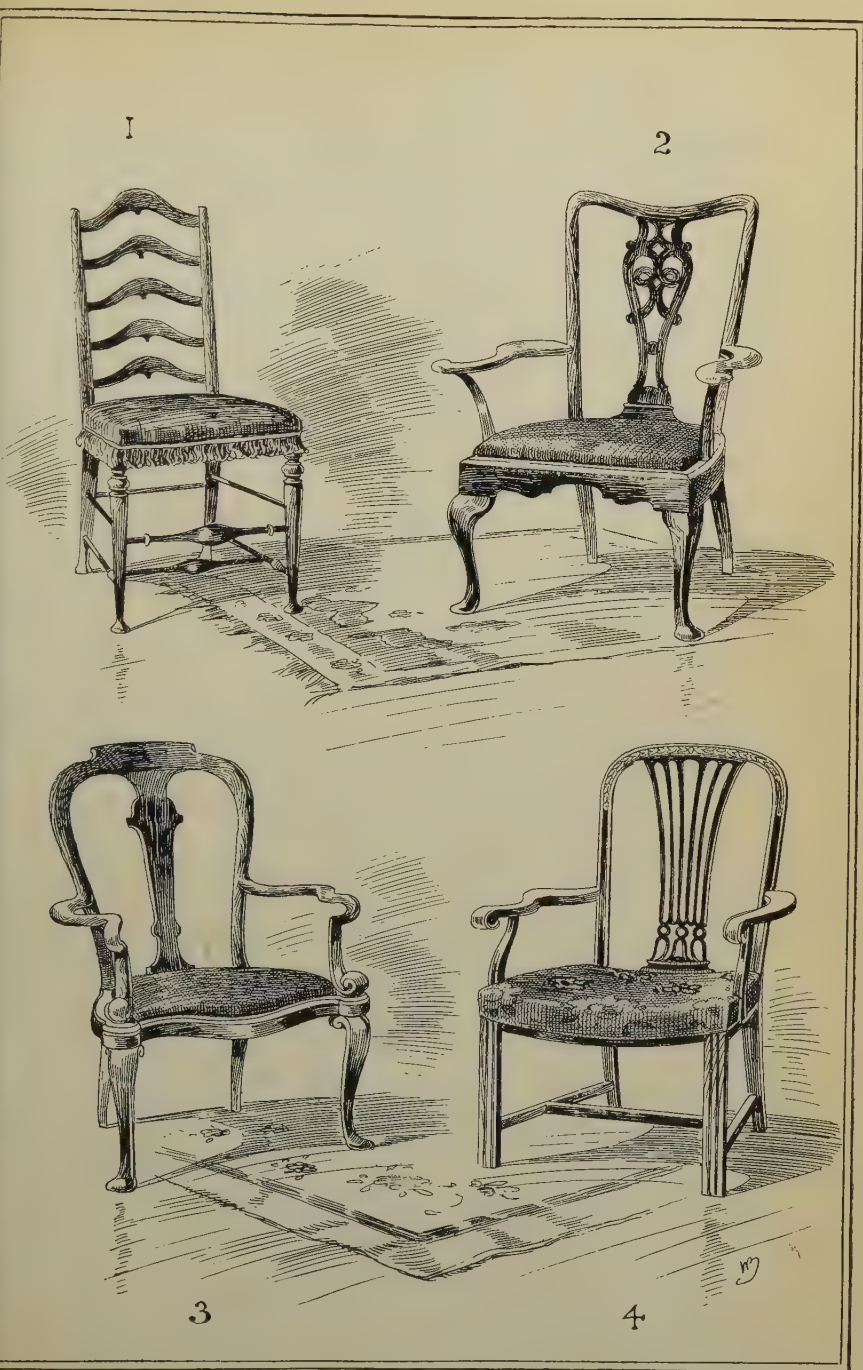
"Late Georgeian," as occasion may require; and, indeed, in my opinion, in many cases it is far preferable to adopt that



GEORGEIAN "SECRETARY" AND EARLY "CHIPPENDALE" CHAIR

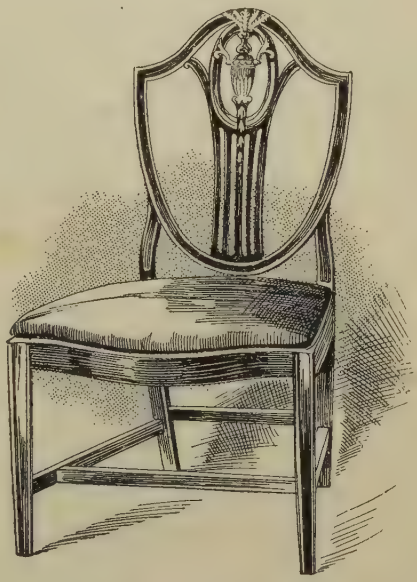
(*See preceding page for reference*)

course, though some people will not remain satisfied with it, demanding something more definite, even though not absolutely correct.




REFERENCE IN TEXT. See page 202

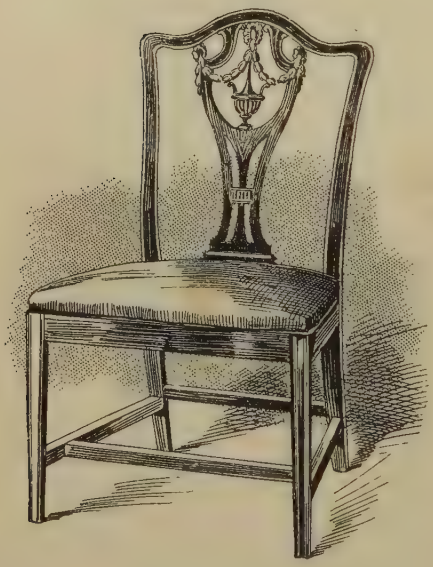
I have mentioned earlier in the book that the popularity of furniture enriched by dainty brush work—a popularity largely brought about by the example and advocacy of Heppelwhite and Sheraton—became so great that, for wealthy patrons, the services of leading painters of the day were requisitioned to add grace and charm to mahogany, and especially satinwood, furniture; and it is recorded that, among other artists of high repute, Angelica Kauffmann and Giovanni Batista Cipriani, both of whom were members of the original "thirty-six" of the Royal Academy, were not above accepting such commissions. Of these two famous painters it is not necessary to say much here, as they shone more particularly in the field of fine art, though they turned their attention occasionally to the applied arts. I may, however, remind the reader that Angelica Kauffmann was the daughter of a Swiss artist, was born in 1742 and died in 1807, and that one of her greatest pictures—"Religion attended by the Graces"—is now in the National Gallery. Cipriani—a Tuscan—was born at Potoja in 1727, pursued his studies in Florence, came to England, made his mark here, and had many of his works



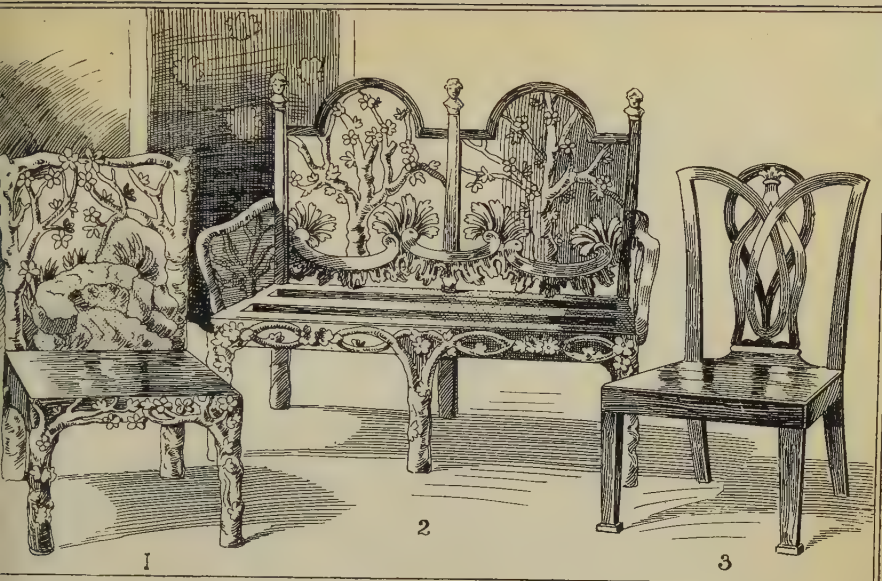
"Heppelwhite" Chair
(With wheat-ear detail in back)
(*See page* 140 *for reference*)

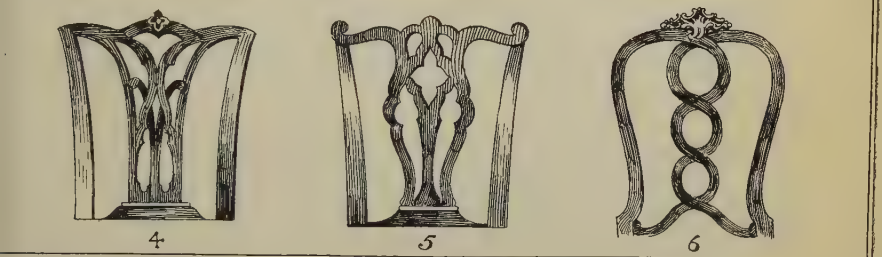
engraved by Bartolozzi. He died at Chelsea in 1785. Pergolesi, too, did considerable work of the same kind, as well as for interior decoration.

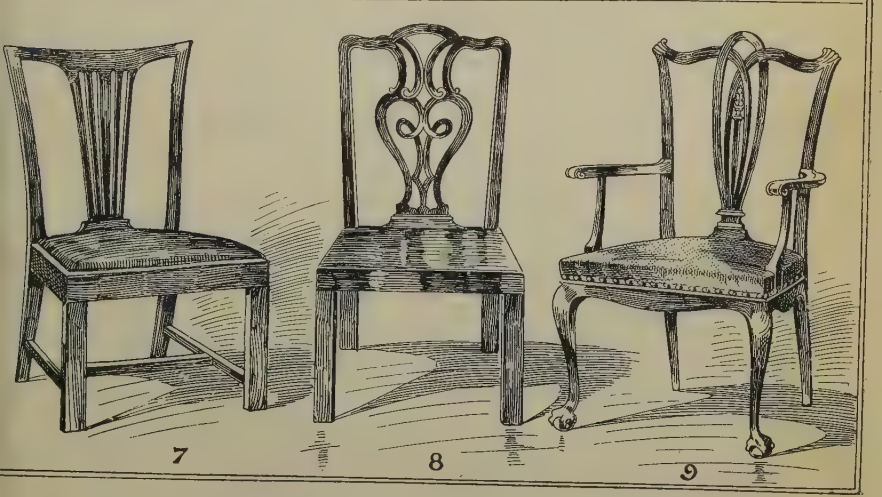
There is yet another feature associated with eighteenth-century furniture which must be mentioned, and that is lacquer as a decorative medium. The demand for this was, to a great extent, created by the importation into this country of Japanese and Chinese productions, in order to give "local colouring" to the quasi-Oriental interiors planned by Sir William Chambers and others who worked on similar lines; and it was employed, though not very extensively, for the enrichment of cabinets and similar articles—chiefly in the form of imported panels. In the case of such small pieces of cabinet work as tea caddies, jewel caskets, and the like, gilt lacquering—generally floral in design, but sometimes in diaper patterns—on a black or brown ground is often found; while, in exceptional instances, most elaborate schemes were rendered in this medium, which was used also as a foundation for the choicest brush work. The greater part of this old lacquer which survives nowadays dates from the later Georgeian period.



GEORGEIAN CHAIR OF THE "HEPPELWHITE" PERIOD

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| Figs. 1, 2. | See 209 | Fig. 6. | See 202 |
| ,, 3 5. | ,, 203, 209 | ,, 7-9. | ,, 203 |

In fulfilment of my promise, given earlier in the chapter, to refer to eighteenth-century books other than those of Chippendale, Heppelwhite, and Sheraton, the following is a list which will, I am sure, be welcomed by a very large number of students. I may point out, too, that nearly all of them are to be found in the National Art Library at South Kensington.

"THE GENTLEMEN'S OR BUILDER'S COMPANION, containing variety of usefull Designs for Doors, Gateways, Peers, Pavilions, Temples, Chimney Pieces, Slab Tables, Pier Glasses, or Tabernacle Frames, Ceiling Pieces, etc." By William Jones, Architect. Published 1739. This contains a strange mixture of designs, from dignified architectural schemes of the heavy "Classic" order to caricatures of "Louis-Quinze" and "Louis-Seize" pier-tables; together with a series of "Classic" mantels that are truly terrible. There are one or two mantels of a better type which may almost be regarded as early heralds of the coming of the "Adam" style; while some of the mirror frames shown are on the lines of that illustrated on page 89 of this book.

"SOME DESIGNS OF MR. INIGO JONES AND MR. WILLIAM KENT." Published 1744. "Classic" mantels of the Palladian School; some attempts at designing on "Louis-Quatorze" lines—embracing an arm-chair, vases, urns, candle stands, dish covers, and ceilings; and a telling (!) illustration of "Merlin's Cave in the Royal Gardens at Richmond."

"A NEW BOOK OF ORNAMENTS, with Twelve Leaves"—it may be well to explain that it is the book which has the "twelve leaves"—"consisting of Chimney Sconces, Tables, Spandle Pannels, Spring Clock Cases, and Stands." By M. Lock and H. Copland. Published 1752. Extreme Rococo throughout.

"A NEW BOOK OF ORNAMENTS." By Angelo Rosis, Florentine. Published 1753. Vigorous and florid Italian schemes for the interior decorator. Plump cupids, "feather-bed" clouds, heavy festoons and "swags," caryatides, atlantes, and the like.

"A New Book of Chinese Designs, calculated to improve the Present Taste, consisting of Figures, Buildings, and Furniture, Landskips, Birds, Beasts, Flowers, and Ornaments, etc." By Edwards and Darly. Published 1754. As this book appeared in the same year as Chippendale's, it is impossible to say which appropriated ideas from which, but there is certainly a remarkably strong resemblance between many of the "Chinese" conceits put forward by Messrs. Edwards and Darly and a number of those which appeared in "The Gentleman's and Cabinet Maker's Director." Some of the lattices in particular are almost identical.

"A New Drawing Book of Ornaments, Shields, Compartments, Masks, etc." By M. Lock. Published about 1660–1670. Extreme Rococo.

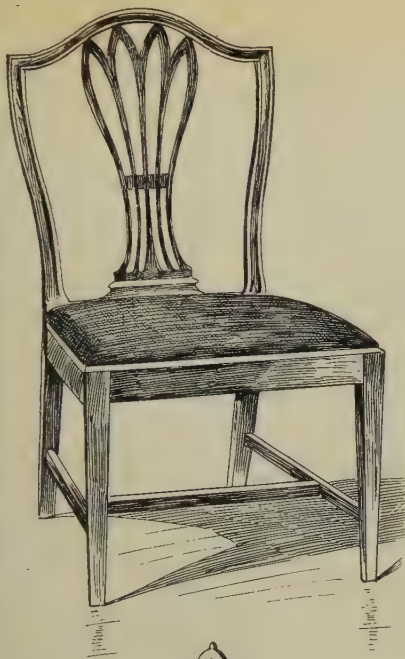
"One Hundred and Fifty New Designs." By Thomas Johnson, carver. Published 1761. Ceilings, mantels, mirror and picture frames, clock cases, girandoles, brackets, etc., etc., in extreme Rococo. This was supplementary to a book of a similar character published by Johnson in 1758.

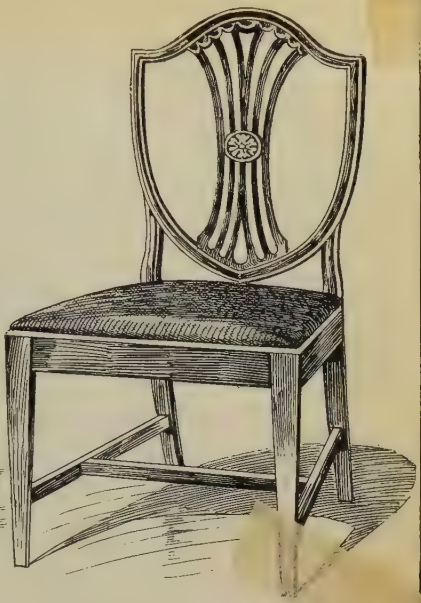
"The Universal System of Household Furniture, consisting of above three hundred Designs in the most Elegant Taste, both useful and ornamental." By Ince and Mayhew, cabinet makers and upholsterers. Published 1762. The designs in this are, to all intents and purposes, "Chippendale," and every phase of that style is represented by them.

"The Joiner's and Cabinet Maker's Darling. Sixty Designs for Ornamental Frets." By J. Crunden. Published 1765–1786–1796.

"Genteel Household Furniture, by a Society of Upholsterers." Published about 1765–1770. More "Chippendale."

"The Cabinet and Chair-Maker's Real Friend and Companion, or the whole System of Chair Making made plain and easy." By Robert Manwaring, cabinet maker.





REFERENCE IN TEXT. See page 203

Published 1765. Very much on "Chippendale" lines. Manwaring, however, cultivated apparent interlacing very greatly in a large number of his chair backs, of the description indicated by Figs. 3, 4, 5, Plate II. He also attempted to introduce a "New Art" based on Nature, as in Figs. 1 and 2, Plate II., described as "Very curious and beautiful designs of rural chairs . . . the only ones of the kind that were ever published." Would that they had been!

"THE CHAIR-MAKER'S GUIDE, being upwards of two-hundred New and Genteel Designs, both decorative and plain, of all the most approved patterns for Gothic, Chinese, Ribbon, and other Chairs, Couches, Settees, Burjairs, French, Dressing, and Corner Stools." By Robert Manwaring and Others. Published 1766. The designs in this are of the same character as those in Manwaring's first book.

"BOOK OF ORNAMENTS, Stucco, Carving Ceilings, Picture Frames, etc." By M. Darly. Published 1769. The schemes here indicate clearly that the refinement of "Heppelwhite," "Sheraton," and "Adam" was very rapidly ousting "French," "Chinese," and "Gothick" extravagances from popular favour.

"A NEW BOOK OF ORNAMENTS, containing a variety of Elegant Designs for Modern Pannels, commonly executed in Stucco, Wood, or Painting, and used in decorating Principal Rooms." By Placido Columbani. Published 1775.

"A VARIETY OF CAPITALS, FREEZES (*sic*), AND CORNICHES, and how to increase or decrease them, still retaining the same proportion as the original. Likewise twelve Designs for Chimney Pieces . . . the whole consisting of twelve plates." By P. Columbani. Published 1776.

"A BOOK OF DESIGNS." By Michel Angelo Pergolesi. Published 1777.

The above-named three books, by Columbani and Pergolesi, constitute a veritable store of the daintiest, most refined, and most characteristic detail, such as did much to make "Heppelwhite," "Sheraton," and "Adam" what they

were. A careful examination of these works aids us greatly in judging the extent to which artists and craftsmen whose names have become household words with us were indebted to contemporaries of whom we seldom, if ever, hear.

"A New Collection of Chimney Pieces, ornamented in the Style of the Etruscan, Greek, and Roman Architecture." By George Richardson, Architect. Published 1781. Here we find "Adam" in its purest and most desirable phases. The renowned brothers produced nothing better than, and much which cannot be compared with, George Richardson's designs.

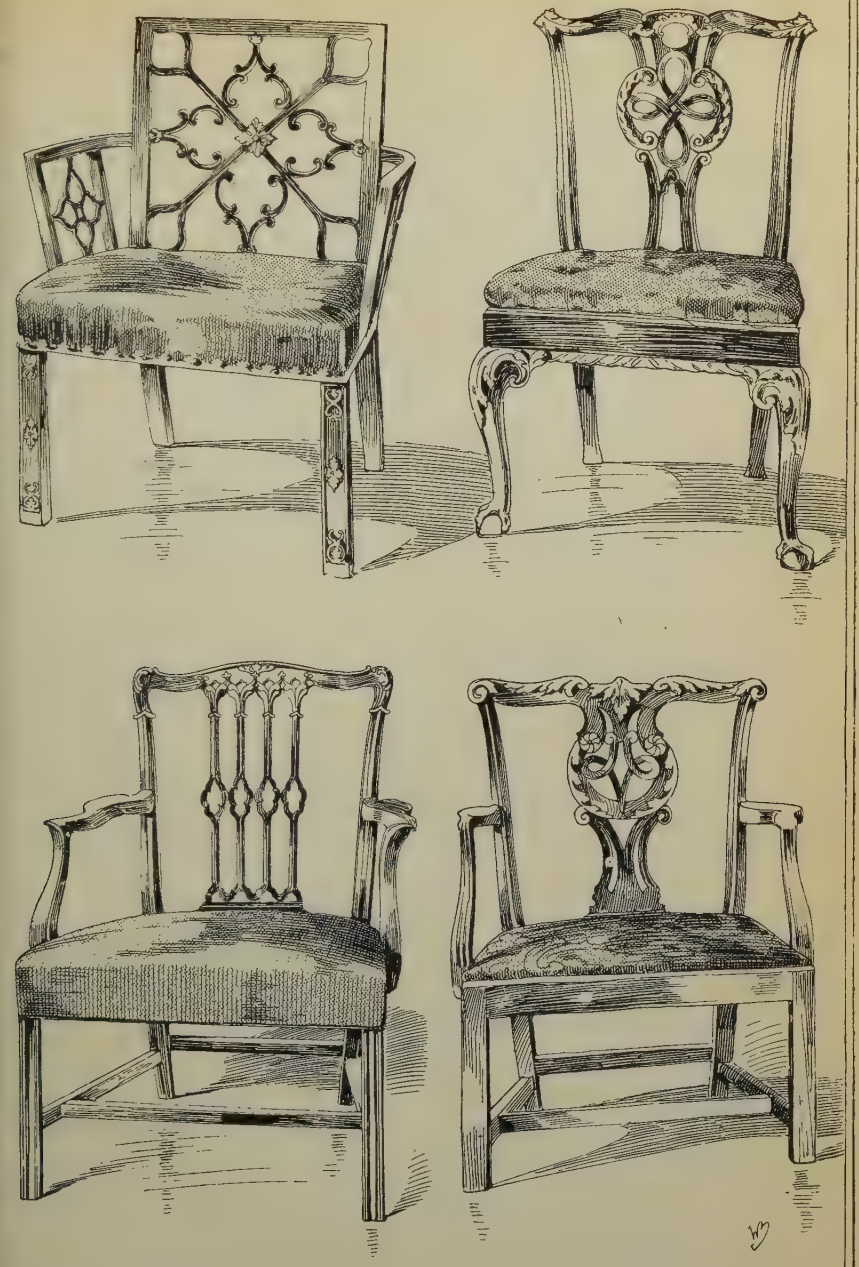
"Designs of Household Furniture." By T. Shearer. Published 1788. All these designs may safely be classed under our "Sheraton" heading so far as nomenclature is concerned.

"The Complete Modern Joiner, or a Collection of Original Designs, in the Present Taste, for Chimney Pieces, and Door Cases." By N. Wallis, Architect. Published 1792. Refined renderings of "Heppelwhite," "Sheraton," and "Adam."

"The Cabinet-Makers' London Book of Prices, and Designs of Cabinet Work." Printed for the London Society of Cabinet Makers, by W. Brown and A. O'Neil. Second Edition 1793. This book constitutes striking testimony to the extent to which "Chippendale" had been superseded by "Heppelwhite" and "Sheraton," and that, too, within a comparatively brief period.

The remaining works (with but one exception) are, to my story, what Zola's "*La Débâcle*" is to his Rougon-Macquart Series. Would the reader wish to see the depths to which the art of the furnisher fell during the earlier years of the nineteenth century, he cannot do better than study them carefully.

"A Collection of Designs for Household Furniture and Interior Decoration, in the most approved and



Reference in Text. See page 203

Elegant Taste." By George Smith, Upholder Extraordinary to the Prince of Wales. (!) Published 1808. This is dedicated to "His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, . . . who has so liberally employed his elegant fancy and acknowledged good taste in promoting this noble pursuit after Classic originals; and the elegant display of superior *virtû* exhibited in his palaces in Pall Mall and at Brighton."

"THE UPHOLSTERERS' AND CABINET-MAKERS' POCKET ASSISTANT." By John Taylor. About 1810–1820.

"ORIGINAL AND NOVEL DESIGNS FOR DECORATIVE HOUSEHOLD FURNITURE." By J. Taylor. About 1810–1820 or 1830.

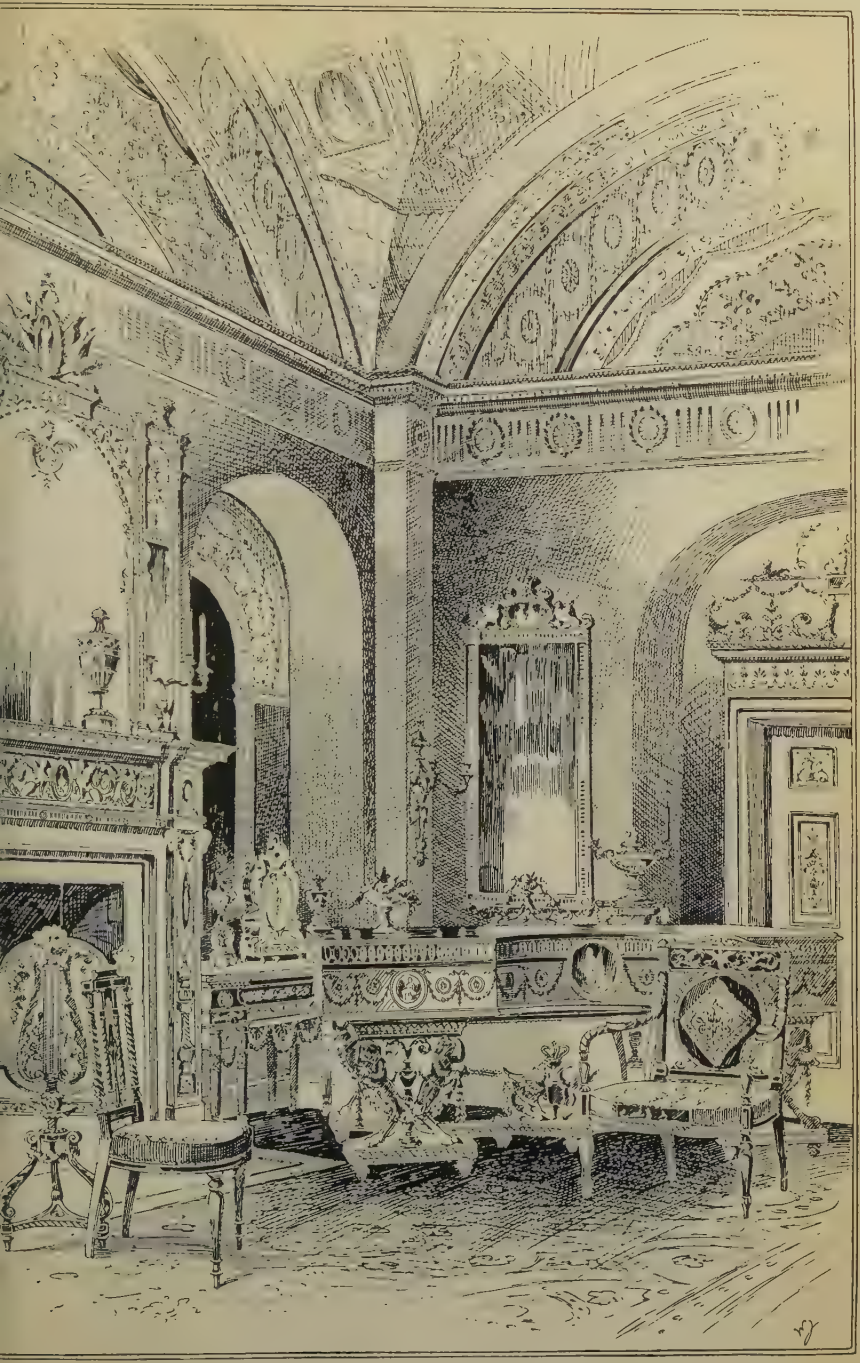
"THE CABINET MAKER AND UPHOLSTERER'S GUIDE. By George Smith, Upholsterer and Furniture Draughtsman to His Majesty; Principal of the Drawing Academy, Brewer Street, Golden Square; and author of various works on the Arts of Design and Decoration." Published 1826.

"A USEFUL AND MODERN WORK on Cheval and Pole Screens, Ottomans, Chairs, and Settees, for mounting *Berlin Needlework*,"—the italics are my own—"by Henry Wood, Decorative Artist and Draughtsman." (Undated.) The mere recollection of them all is sufficient to induce a shudder.

I have mentioned that there was one exception, and that is a work entitled "HOUSEHOLD FURNITURE AND INTERIOR DECORATION, executed from Designs by Thomas Hope," which was published in 1807. Hope was evidently a very severe critic, for, speaking of articles of furniture generally, as designed by Chippendale, Heppelwhite, Sheraton, and their contemporaries, he said: "Almost every one of these articles, however, abandoned, till very lately, in this country to the taste of the sole upholder, entirely ignorant of the most familiar principles of visible beauty, wholly uninstructed in the simplest rudiments of drawing"—poor old Sheraton!—"or, at most, only fraught with a few wretched ideas and trivial conceits borrowed from the worst models of the degraded French School of the middle of the last century,

was left totally destitute of those attributes of true elegance and beauty, which, though secondary, are yet of such importance to the extension of our national pleasures"—and so forth for many pages. To remedy this, he endeavoured to transplant the severe refinement of the old Greek and Roman palaces at their best into the English home, and, as a natural result, he failed utterly and completely in his attempt. Some few—very few—of his simpler designs for chairs did "live" for a time, but the vast majority were either too costly in execution to gain popularity, or were altogether out of keeping with our national ideas of domestic comfort. We must admit, however, that the taste displayed throughout the work is of a very high order.

There are other books which might be mentioned, did space permit, but they are not of importance, and those named constitute as exhaustive a list as one need desire.



REFERENCE IN TEXT. See pages 213-215

# "ADAM"

TOWARDS the close of the eighteenth century, when extensive building operations were in course of procedure over that area in London which is now commonly known as the Adelphi, and which, I need hardly say, is situated on the north bank of the Thames, not far from Charing Cross, a quatrain was written to the following effect :—

> "'Two brothers of the name of Adam,
> Who keep their coaches and their mesdames'
> —Quoth John, in surly mood, to Thomas—
> 'Have stol'n the very river from us!'"

The lines referred, of course, to the erection of those quasi-classic edifices which were then being completed after the designs of the two architects who flourished during the reign of George the Third, and afterwards became known as the "Adelphian Brothers."

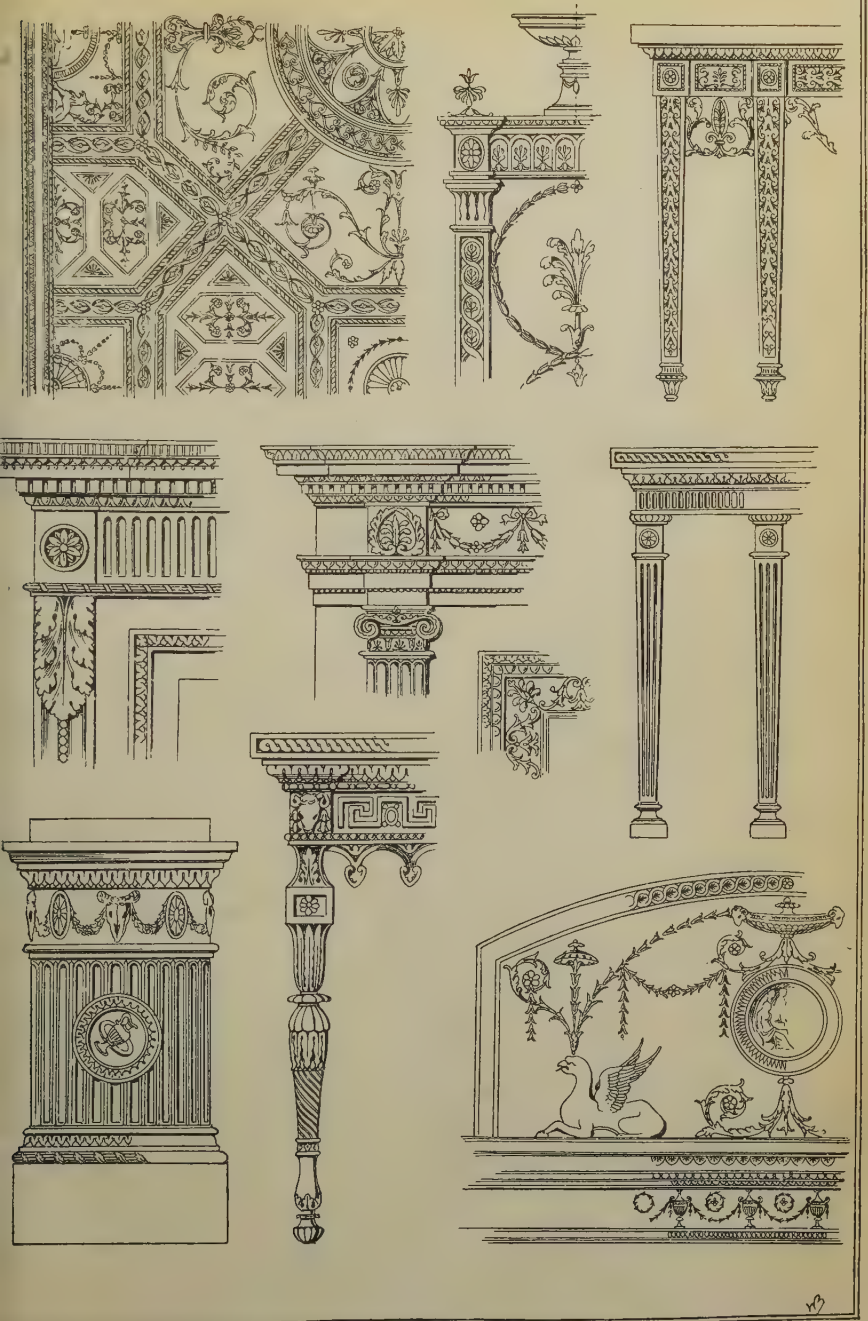
The elder of the two—Robert Adam—was born at Kirkcaldy in 1728. Having passed through the usual experiences associated with the average childhood, he commenced his studies in architecture, and elected to spend some years in Italy in order that he might imbibe his knowledge from the fountain-head. On his return to England, he joined hands with his brother James. In 1768—before he was forty—he was appointed "Architect to the King," entered Parliament, won popular favour by the character of his rendering of the Classic, died in 1792, and was buried in Westminster Abbey.

It will be seen, therefore, that the brothers Adam were at work on the production of their designs during the period when "Chippendale," "Heppelwhite," and "Sheraton" were

at the highest pitch of development; and by reason of the fact that they were responsible for the plans of many of the more important buildings furnished on the lines laid down by the originators of those three styles, they have received a great amount of credit to which they were never in the least entitled. What they really earned should suffice. Although they made some slight essays in the designing of furniture, these architects, as a matter of fact, exerted but small direct influence upon English furniture proper, notwithstanding the fact that their name is so frequently quoted in connection with it. The marks which they did leave upon the interior of our homes were, for the most part, in the way of stucco wall and ceiling decoration, and mantelpieces — of which they designed a vast number.

Their preferences were for the lighter and daintier phases of the Classic, and they delighted more in the effeminate conceits of the "Pompeian" than in the dignified grandeur of the "Palladian" school. The result was that they produced a style in architecture that depends largely on delicate stucco detail for its effect; and which, while generally refined in character, is certainly lacking in dignity. But of architecture as such it is not in my province to write here, and I must be content with giving a mere note or two upon the "Adam" interior which forms the subject of the accompanying plate, and which embraces many of the chief characteristics of the style in question.

As I have already mentioned, "Adam" mantels are very numerous, but all are more or less of the type illustrated, as regards the character of the detail with which they are enriched, though the majority were not so crowded with ornamentation. The mouldings are invariably of the simplest and purest classic order, the "dentil," "egg-and-tongue," and acanthus types being freely introduced. The cinerary vase and urn were favourite details, and were generally accompanied by delicate "swags," or festoons of drapery, leaves,



TYPICAL "ADAM" DETAIL. (See pages 213–215)

or "husks." Acanthus scrolls and chimerical creatures also are characteristic of the style (see the mantel illustrated), but the foliations are of the lighter, almost wiry, description, rather than of the heavier "Roman" school; while the creatures themselves generally look as if they would be none the worse for a good hearty meal.

Another typical feature is the "fan," disposed either in an oval, or employed to enrich corner spaces in the form of a spandril—"spandle" it was often styled in those old times. The "flute," both plain and "stopped," is of frequent occurrence; garlands and wreaths are plentiful, and it is not at all uncommon to find Wedgwood "Jasper" medallions framed-in amidst such enrichment. "But," the reader may exclaim, "most of the details enumerated are to be found in 'Sheraton.'" Precisely so, and it naturally follows that "Sheraton," and even "Heppelwhite," furniture is the very thing to accord with "Adam" decoration. The grand piano designed by the brothers Adam, which is illustrated herewith, can hardly be described as a triumph from the furniture designer's point of view; but the design was published in the Adams' book, and so finds a place here.

There can be no doubt at all that there is a certain delicate charm associated with the best phases of the "Adam" style; but we are never impressed by it, and in its presence we are more than a little tempted to fall into the phraseology of the ladies' penny paper, and exclaim "How sweetly pretty!"

# THE "LOUIS-QUATORZE"

THE brief discussion of the few French styles with which I have elected to deal in these pages must be prefaced by a word or two of explanation, which, I sincerely trust, will be most carefully read and noted by all who may be disposed to regard my endeavours from the critical point of view. It has been explained fully in the introduction that, in preparing this chapter and the three which follow, it has not for one moment been my intention to attempt to present anything in the least approaching a full and complete history of the French work we are now about to pass in review; to do so within the comparatively narrow limits imposed is altogether out of the question. Indeed, to each individual style many volumes might be, nay, have been, devoted by other and more able writers, with whose productions I do not propose to enter into competition.

The introduction of French work at all in a treatise the main object of which is to convey a knowledge of style in English furniture may at the first glance appear to be out of place—at least to those who have not already made a study of the subject—and calls for some explanation; but that it is essential to the proper carrying out of my purpose, a perusal of these pages will plainly show. It must be understood, therefore, that the student whose requirements demand an exhaustive analysis and history of French cabinet work of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and early nineteenth centuries, must by no means look for it here. Of books to furnish him with all the information he may require there is already an *embarras de choix*. French writers generally, and historians particularly, have delighted to do honour to their great artists

and craftsmen of all ages, sparing neither pains nor expense to place on record, in a form worthy of them, the wondrous story of the greatest achievements of those old workers. It is not my intention, at the present time at all events, to follow the example of these chroniclers, except in a very modest way, and, as I have already explained, so far only as may be essential to the attainment of the particular object I have in view. That object, I think, must have become apparent by this time.

In the preceding chapters, the plan adopted has not been to give merely a simple description of the models presented just as they stand, and no more; but it has been my constant endeavour, in all cases, to probe far more deeply into the question, to show the origin, growth, and final development of each particular style, and, as far as possible, to give its genealogical tree. In following my attempt to do this, it cannot but have become apparent to the reader that, just as in the domain of millinery and dress generally we have, as a nation, been guided for generations by the French, have noted even the slightest changes of fashion in the Gay Capital and seized with avidity upon the modes created there; so, in the furnishing and beautifying of our homes, we have never hesitated to draw, and draw most freely, our inspiration from the creations of the *ébénistes* and *tapissiers* of France. We have not, it is true, indulged this propensity fully during recent years; but, as has been made clearly evident, we certainly did so, and with a very grasping hand, in past centuries, and most particularly during the eighteenth. It has naturally followed, that in the chapters treating on the work of the great English cabinet makers of the last-named period, references to the "Louis-Quatorze," the "Louis-Quinze," and the "Louis-Seize," have frequently recurred. We have been forced to acknowledge that the most important phases of our "Chippendale," "Heppelwhite," and "Sheraton," were inspired to a great extent by them. This

being the case, it occurred to me that something more than a mere descriptive reference to these French modes was required in order to render my scheme complete. I decided, therefore, that it would be in every respect desirable to include here brief illustrated summaries of their chief characteristics.

The foregoing explanation is somewhat lengthy, and may savour of "protesting too much"; my only excuse for its appearance must be my great anxiety that the reader should understand clearly that the present treatment of the styles in question has been planned simply and purely in order to place before those who peruse these pages some of the actual models which our old English cabinet makers and designers had in view when they originated the modes since designated by their names.

It is, however, desirable, even in so brief a review of the styles as will appear here, to recall to mind certain political and social conditions under which they developed, and by which they were, in a greater or less degree, influenced. By so doing the presence of many features may be reasonably accounted for, features whose appearance might otherwise be regarded as a mere accident, with the result that their true significance would be ignored. What, then, was the condition of affairs in France when the "Louis-Quatorze" was growing towards its fullest development? Let us review it as briefly as we can.

It must be recognised that, in essaying to give any account of the progress of the arts and crafts which spread from France to other countries during the reign of Louis the Fourteenth—a progress, be it remembered, which was in a great degree directly due to his encouragement, and was fostered by his ministers and the members of his court—the boldest writer may well be beset with diffidence.

The period was one of unsurpassed splendour and extraordinary activity in all departments of artistic endeavour.

The reign was, above all things, spectacular; and, according to one of the greatest French writers: "The brilliant display . . . afforded some compensation in those times, thanks to the kindly feelings of the people and to the traditions of deep devotion to their sovereigns, for the enormous expenses charged upon the taxes. Mazarin had said 'Let them sing, provided they pay'; while Louis XIV.'s remark was 'Let them look.' Sight had replaced the voice; the people could still look, but they could no longer sing."

This monarch was no ordinary man. Moreover, when he attained to years of discretion, and saw a possibility of ordering everything as he wished, he was fortunate in having at his beck and call men of phenomenal mental calibre and physical energy to carry out the gigantic schemes that had long been fructifying in his brain—and to supplement them by others of their own creation. The whole tenor of this sovereign's reign, from the moment when he assumed supreme command, illustrates most powerfully the law of reaction. As a child he was brought up under the strictest discipline, perpetually subject to the surveillance of the severest "tutors and governors"; furthermore, if we are told aright, through the parsimony of Mazarin, he was kept in a state of comparative poverty—poverty at least for a destined ruler of France. That cordially detested Italian was for a long time practically the head of the State, and undoubtedly possessed the ear of the Queen Mother, the haughty Anne of Austria, whether the belief entertained in some quarters that the two were actually husband and wife has any foundation in fact or not.

The spirit of the young King, nevertheless, was by no means crushed; on the contrary, it was developed and hardened. He bided his time in patience; formulating and pondering over his plans for the future. When the long wished for removal of the Prime Minister was brought about by the hand of death, Louis proved himself to be a man of iron, filled with a fixed determination to reign alone and absolutely

supreme; disposed to brook not the slightest suggestion of interference with his wishes from anybody, and jealous of obedience and admiration, not to say adulation, from the whole of the civilised world.

The pendulum swung from one extreme to the other, and everything was done on a lavish scale. Louis had planned a reign which should dazzle by its splendour, and past experience had taught him that this was not to be attained by miserly niggardliness. "Leakages" of State monies were discovered and stopped; the Surintendant Fouquet himself was condemned to banishment for peculation; and with the demolition of the powers of the financiers and farmers of the revenue, who were either dismissed or hanged, the royal coffers were filled again to overflowing, and a new era commenced. What an era it was which brought to light such men as Condé, Turenne, and Vauban; Colbert and Louvois; Corneille, Racine, Molière, La Fontaine, Boileau, Bossuet, Fénélon, Le Brun, and Perrault—to name but a few of its master minds! The only emblem of which Louis could think, in order fitly to symbolise the brilliance of the intellectual and material environment which was to distinguish his reign, was the sun itself, with resplendent rays darting from it, and accompanied by the legend "*Nec pluribus impar.*" And "Le Roi Soleil" he became.

In writing of the encouragement of the arts in France at this time, we must not omit the name of Colbert, who was bequeathed, as it were, by Mazarin to the king as a most valuable possession; which he indeed proved to be. He saw that financial encouragement was liberally accorded to anyone whose services would either benefit the State or tend to render the epoch more magnificent. There were other and most important factors also to be borne in mind, though perhaps, from the point of view of strict morality, we might prefer to ignore them. It has been contended, however, that there *is* no morality in art. Be that as it may, certain it is

that, at more than one epoch, the cultivation of the Beautiful was the most lavishly generous, and therefore bore the richest fruit, under the most immoral influences. How, indeed, does the development of the "Louis-Quatorze" and, for the matter of that, the development of all the French art of those days stand when regarded in this light? Was it, for example, for the lawful queens of the sovereigns of France that the greatest poets, painters, musicians, and artists of every class and kind vied one with another to produce masterpiece after masterpiece, or was it for the Vallières, Maintenons, Du Barrys, and the like? Can there be any two opinions in the matter? The lawful wives were bound to their sovereigns by the strongest legal ties, but the good graces of the "left-hand queens" were only to be won and retained by the most lavish gifts, and the tireless studying and satisfying of their whims and fancies. Is it not much to be feared that the truly wedded spouse had often, metaphorically, to rest content with Sully Prudhomme's "*verre épaisse*," while the usurper of her rightful position held her court amidst untold magnificence; was fawned upon and flattered by the highest in the land, whose favour at court often depended upon their paying such homage, whether it was to their taste or not; and enjoyed *her* draughts, while her sway lasted, from the "*goblet de cristal*"? So at least it is recorded, and we must accept the facts as they are presented to us. These French monarchs were constantly striving to surround the objects of their choice with every comfort and luxury; and among those who benefited thereby the furnisher naturally figured prominently, for was it not by him that the surroundings of the royal favourites had to be rendered beautiful?

An interesting point in relation to this aspect of affairs has been emphasised by Lady Dilke. I refer to the great contrast between the rare taste almost invariably displayed of old in the artistic gems created in honour of those who were queens by favour, and the taste of those designed as gifts for even

the most exalted of lawful sovereigns of more modern times. As an illustration calculated to place this point in its most forcible light, the Jubilee presents of the late Queen Victoria are quoted, and, as may be imagined, the comparisons drawn are by no means to their credit. Intrinsically they were, of course, of almost fabulous value, but as works of art it would perhaps be more kind to say nothing further about them. What *can* be said in their praise? But that is a matter which does not call for discussion here, though the question itself that is raised is rather curious and interesting, and fully worth noting in passing.

The query naturally arises, what was the secret of the attainment of so high a standard by the artists and craftsmen of France under the rule of Louis the Fourteenth? I am more than a little disposed to claim that direct, generous, energetic, and, above all, wisely-directed State patronage was mainly responsible for it all, or, at least, for the "lion's share." The artist or craftsman of those days who distinguished himself in any way was certain, at the very least, of a living, and possibly a fortune if he managed his affairs wisely. If he attained the "blue riband" of his art or craft, an *appartement au Louvre*, he was indeed to be envied. We cannot but recognise the fact, from whatever point of view we regard it, that the institution of these State *ateliers*—one of Colbert's many ideas—where the workers were placed under the immediate patronage of the sovereign, was a master stroke. It is quite possible, of course, that working in particular and duly specified grooves, in order to "tickle the tastes and please the fads" of the powers that were, may have tended in some degree to curb the artistic aspirations and stunt the originality; but, nevertheless, rare advantages compensated for any temporary harm which may have accrued in that respect. For one thing, the position of the occupants of the *appartements* was officially recognised by the State; they were, in fact, quite distinguished personages in their way, and apart altogether from the honour

and glory, their "bread-and-butter" was more than sure, while, to most of them fell the "plums" of their profession or craft.

The foregoing is a brief statement of the ruling conditions under which the "Louis-Quatorze" flourished, and, having glanced at them, we must now proceed to see, so far as space will permit, what the style ultimately became, and to what extent it furnished inspiration for our own designers and craftsmen.

It is extremely difficult, if not altogether impossible, to lay down a set of rules or give specified definitions that will enable the student to distinguish immediately and with perfect exactitude between late seventeenth and early eighteenth century French work. The different styles overlap, or rather blend at times with one another to such a degree that to classify them and apportion each of them to its respective period with exactitude is a task which calls for more than a mere superficial knowledge if success is to be gained. When we come to the "Louis-Seize" and "Empire" the difficulty is lessened, by reasons which will be explained later.

It will be remembered that the reign of Louis the Fourteenth was one of exceptional duration, lasting for over seventy years. As was only natural, during that period many changes and developments took place in fashion of furniture as in other matters, though they were neither so very great nor so revolutionary as might have been expected. It was, however, only the later phases which influenced the eighteenth-century English designer to any appreciable extent—that is to say, the phases immediately preceding the advent of the "Louis-Quinze." It is those, therefore, that concern us.

Before commencing my review of the chief characteristics of the "Louis-Quatorze" as a style, it may be as well to take a brief glance at one of the most notable of the workers in the *appartements;* at a man who rose to pre-eminence from

the ranks of the designers and craftsmen of his time, and played a leading part in making the mode what it eventually became. I refer to André-Charles Boulle. Most people who know anything at all of seventeenth-century French furniture, and many who do not, speak glibly of "Buhl"; and though they could not, for the life of them, tell what it is, they know that it is something rare and costly. Even Oliver Wendell Holmes himself, that man of culture rare, in his delicious little conceit "Contentment," protests :—

> "Shall not a few carved tables serve my turn?
> But they must be of 'Buhl'"

—a flagrant error, of course. We shall do well, then, to see that there is no misunderstanding in our minds as regards the nature of the furniture whose beauties caused the name of their designer and maker to be handed down with such honour to posterity. As this furniture constituted a leading feature in the household gods of the "Louis-Quatorze," we shall not have to go out of our way for the purpose.

André-Charles Boulle was born in 1642, and lived to a ripe old age, for we find him still working eighty years later. His record throughout was a remarkably exceptional one. In addition to conceiving and executing his own numerous masterpieces, many of which, I need hardly say, still stand unrivalled, Boulle trained such men as Levasseur, Montigny, Oeben, and Jacob—to mention but one or two—as well as his four sons, Jean-Phillipe, Charles-Joseph, Pierre-Benoit, and André-Charles the younger, who, in their turn, made their way to positions of eminence, and not only gave practical demonstration of the possession of exceptional genius, but still further enhanced the reputation of their great progenitor and master.

It was not until 1672 that Boulle (the father) attained to what was the height of ambition to so many of his fellows, the greatly coveted *appartement au Louvre*. He was only thirty

years of age at the time; but, it seems hardly necessary to say that, though still a young man, he had even then excelled in his profession and craft, for he would not have been the recipient of so notable a mark of royal approbation had he been nothing more than an average designer or craftsman. When the application for the bestowal of the honour was made by him, or on his behalf by eminent patrons who fully appreciated his genius, Colbert submitted it to the king; but the settlement of the matter was left practically in the hands of the minister, for, on the document presented to his Majesty, bearing a note of the application, appears the inscription in the royal handwriting—"*Les appartements au plus habile.*"

Colbert was not the type of man to let the *appartements* pass into the possession of mere place-seekers, and it may be taken for granted that had anyone been able to present stronger claims than those of Boulle they would have been considered first. It was ever the great *Intendant's* aim to secure, at any cost, the right man for the right place, and it may be recorded to his lasting credit that he almost invariably managed to attain his object.

It is generally imagined that Boulle was the originator of, and confined his attention to the production of, that class of furniture which is enriched by the incrustation of tortoiseshell, brass, copper, and tin in the form of inlay, and which has come to bear his name—though it is, more often than not, spelt "Buhl" by most English writers; but that idea is very far from correct. In the first place, inlaid, or incrusted, furniture of the description referred to was known long before 1672, for, to quote but two instances that go to prove its prior existence, an inventory of some of Mazarin's treasures, dated 1653, includes details of cabinets ornamented with tortoiseshell and copper; and secondly, a cabinet in the Musée Cluny, at Paris, dating from the sixteenth century, is similarly enriched. These show beyond a doubt that metal

incrustation of this particular class was well known, though not, of course, common, long before the appearance of the Boulles. The Boulles, however, and André-Charles the father, above all, did much to develop this treatment and bring it to the state of technical perfection which it attained at the commencement of the seventeenth century. As I have said, they produced triumphs of their craft which have never been surpassed, though how many times they have been reproduced it is impossible to say.

The type of marquetry referred to is, of course, well known to collectors and connoisseurs the world over; but for the information of the general reader it may perhaps be as well if I quote Molinier's lucid description of the way in which it is prepared. That writer says: "Sheets of full size and thickness are prepared of materials selected—copper, tin, ebony, and shell; these sheets are glued together and cut into a given pattern. This done, when the sheets are detached, one has in hand—should copper and inlaying tortoise-shell have been employed—two decorative patterns, and two grounds for inlaying—that is to say, the sheets of shell or copper out of which the patterns have been cut. The next step is to insert copper patterns in the shell ground and the shell patterns in the copper ground. Two panels are thus obtained, totally different in aspect, but absolutely alike in pattern."

But Boulle was something more than merely a great master *marqueteur*. Indeed, in his time he was officially described as "*architecte, peintre, et sculptre en mosaïque, ébéniste, ciseleur, et marqueteur ordinaire du roy*," and there can be no possible doubt that he was as true an artist by nature as he was master of the tools essential to the practice of his craft. To such an extent was this the case that the acquisition and retention of money appear to have been regarded by him as quite secondary considerations, so that, extensive and distinguished as was the patronage he commanded, he never made

what is called a commercial success. Whatever he received by way of remuneration, instead of being devoted to the liquidation of his debts, was spent, some would say squandered, in the collection of rare art treasures, which never afterwards realised what he originally gave for them. The result was that in the end he died in absolute penury, having been hounded hither and thither by infuriated and unsympathetic creditors.

I must not be tempted, however, to go into further biographical details concerning him; indeed, I should not have entered at so great length into the story of the Louis the Fourteenth epoch had it not been that during this period the impetus was given which led to the creation of those French styles which followed, constituting a veritable Renaissance in themselves—a Renaissance to which we owe so much.

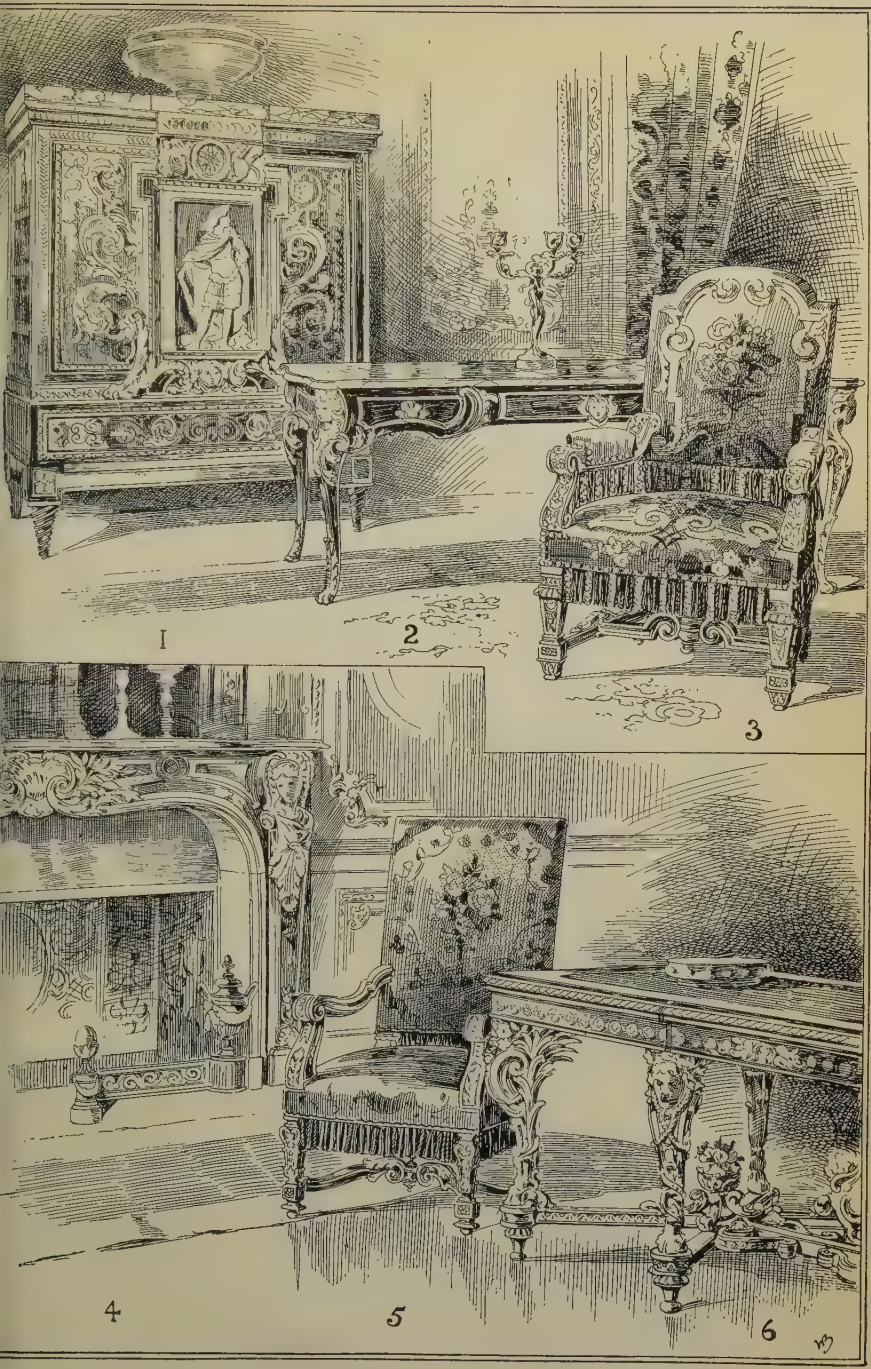
With regard to the models that appear upon the three plates accompanying these notes, we will first examine two examples of the famous "Boulle" before proceeding to others, and gain as adequate an idea of the form and appearance of furniture of that type as can be obtained from black-and-white illustration. What is, perhaps, one of the finest pieces ever produced appears in the magnificent armoire, shown in Fig. 1, Plate I.; apart from its design, it is a veritable masterpiece of craftsmanship. Every detail of the surface enrichment, be it remembered, was cut in brass, copper, tin, or tortoiseshell, and the whole was pieced together with almost microscopic exactitude, and supplemented by exquisitely moulded and chased brass mounts, which in themselves must have cost a small fortune to produce. The design of the inlay, as will be observed, was by no means as simple as might reasonably have been expected, if we bear in mind the materials of which it was composed and the method of its production; on the contrary, it is more than a little intricate, being crowded with detail of a very free and flowing description, and foliated scrolls play a most important part in it. Attractive as it is in

the sketch, in the original itself, glowing with the fine colouring of rare tortoiseshell, and relieved by the varied and shimmering tones of copper, brass, and tin, it possesses a richness of effect which altogether baffles description.

Another rare piece of "Boulle" will be found in the writing-table on Plate III., which is exceptionally graceful in form for the period, and most tastefully enriched in the manner described. Many more examples might be introduced, but their appearance here is not necessary, for, when the class of incrustation has once been seen, or a full description of it has been given, the work can never be mistaken. Before leaving the subject, I may, however, mention that the "carcase work" or foundation of "Boulle" is nearly always comparatively simple in form. This was essential, since the intricate enrichment with which it was destined to be covered was not amenable to being twisted into elaborate or tortuous shapes.

It is impossible to write, however briefly, of the French furniture of this period without paying some attention to the development of metal work other than "Boulle" as a decorative medium, since the *fondeurs* and *ciseleurs* then occupied a position almost as high as that of the *ébéniste* himself, and were paid munificently for the invaluable aid they afforded the wood worker. It would take long to tell of all that was done by that band of men leading up to Gouthière who made the metal work of the period what it was; and it is not my privilege to do so here. I must, however, emphasise the fact that they are not for one moment to be confounded with the mere skilled mechanic who presides at the forge, mould, and melting pot in order to see that other men's ideas are properly carried into effect; or with the simple engraver who puts the finishing touches on work already prepared for him. No, they were of a stamp vastly different from that.

They were rarely gifted artists first and craftsmen afterwards, and they only took the trouble to gain a complete

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| Fig. 1. | See 227, 230 | Fig. 4. | See — |
| ,, 2. | ,, 231, 232 | ,, 5. | ,, — |
| ,, 3. | ,, — | ,, 6. | ,, 231 |

mastery over tool, method, and material in order that the fancies of their brain might be translated into concrete form in the exact way they wished; they could not entrust their interpretation to other hands. Full advantage, moreover, was taken of their powers and services, and there need be small wonder that such should have been the case, for they created and produced the daintiest and most charming conceits in metal, and particularly in brass. By the force of their genius and skill, they seemed to inspire it with very life, and we may congratulate ourselves most heartily that they were prepared to work hand in hand with the cabinet maker, and bring their ideas into conformity with his requirements, deeming it not beneath their dignity to devote the best of their endeavours and abilities to the beautification of the common surroundings of daily life. *Chefs d'œuvre* in modelling that would now be highly prized, cherished, and proudly displayed as choice works of art in themselves, calling for no other accompaniment to entitle them to positions of honour in any art collection, were then used merely as "mounts" or ornaments, for the ostensible support of a table top, or to decorate the "knee" of a chair leg; and all were characterised by a *verve* and spontaneity which irresistibly charm us to this very day.

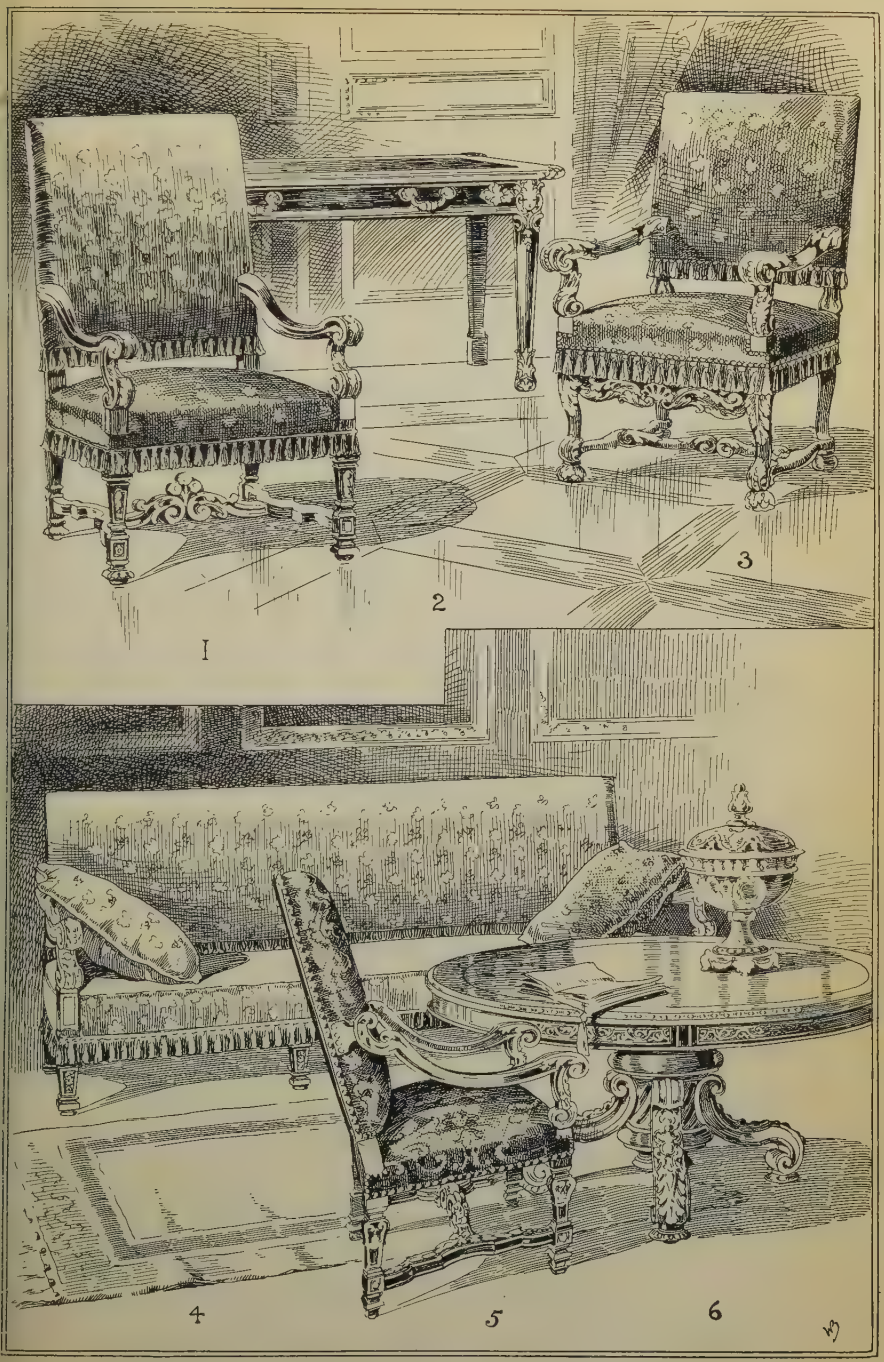
It should be noted particularly that one of the greatest charms of these brass or *ormolu* mounts consisted in the frequent introduction of the human head—usually the female head—not conventionalised, nor stiffly posed, as at earlier and later periods, but instinct with all that entrancing grace and *abandon* which the French pre-eminently always have imparted, and perhaps always will impart, to their modelling and sculpture of the human form.

This *ormolu*, furthermore, even when regarded from the technical point of view, and if the question of its design be for the moment put aside, attained as near perfection as was possible. It was not the average "puddingy," lifeless casting

of modern commerce; it glowed, sparkled, and scintillated, fresh from the hand of the master, seeming to proclaim in unmistakable accents, "my creation was a labour of love." And why was this? Simply because the execution was entrusted to the most gifted artist-craftsmen that could be found, and because when found they were munificently paid. The price of a single mount, in many instances, would be ample to furnish completely and comfortably many an ordinary house nowadays. We cannot, therefore, institute a comparison between such work and the stock brass mounts of to-day, which are produced according to a stipulated and by no means too generous price, and sold over the wholesale ironmonger's counter at so much "per set." The comparison would not be fair. It is only just, indeed, to say that, even in these so-called degenerate times, French *ormolu*, as fine as any ever produced even in the palmiest days, can easily be obtained by those who are in a position, and prepared, to pay for it.

Justice cannot possibly be done by mere pen-and-ink sketches to many of these old masterpieces of the metal worker's craft, but their form and character can be indicated by such means, and with that we must, for the time being, rest content.

I will ask the reader, then, to note the massive foliated mounts, with the female head and lion's paws, that apparently support the centre projection in the *armoire*, Fig. 1, Plate I.; also the figure of the king in old classic garb, and the military trophy above. These are designed after the dignified martial manner common to much "Louis-Quatorze" decoration, and intended to symbolise the military prowess of the monarch, to curry whose approbation and favour it was conceived. There was more than a suggestion of the old "Roman" about it all, a characteristic which later on developed to a remarkable degree in the "Empire," as we shall see in a succeeding chapter.




REFERENCE IN TEXT. See pages 230, 231, 232

The mounts on the table, Fig. 2, Plate I., are of quite a different character, and belong to a later date, heralding the imminent advent of the "Louis-Quinze"; those of the table, Fig. 2, Plate II., carry us back to an intermediate stage, and recall, in some measure, the heavy classic style. The scrolls of the table legs, Fig. 6, Plate II., also are heavily mounted with brass leafage, and the band of enrichment round the circular top is of the choicest "Boulle." The general form of this table seems to indicate that the piece belongs to a date later than that of the "Louis-Quatorze," but it is stated on good French authority to be an authentic example. We see in it, at all events, the model that inspired the design of many thousands of English centre tables a century or more later.

The elaborate table shown in Fig. 6, Plate I., is also a late example, and marks the commencement of the growth of that tendency to overdo ornamentation, and supersede the constructional by the decorative, which spread so alarmingly in the culminating phases of the succeeding style. This model cannot actually be described as "Louis-Quinze," but it approaches very near to it.

A word or two regarding the chairs and seats, and the justification for their appearance here. The reader who studies these types carefully, and examines their forms and detail, will discover in them the source whence were drawn the ideas that led to the creation of not a few later English "Jacobean" forms. Let me particularise a few instances.

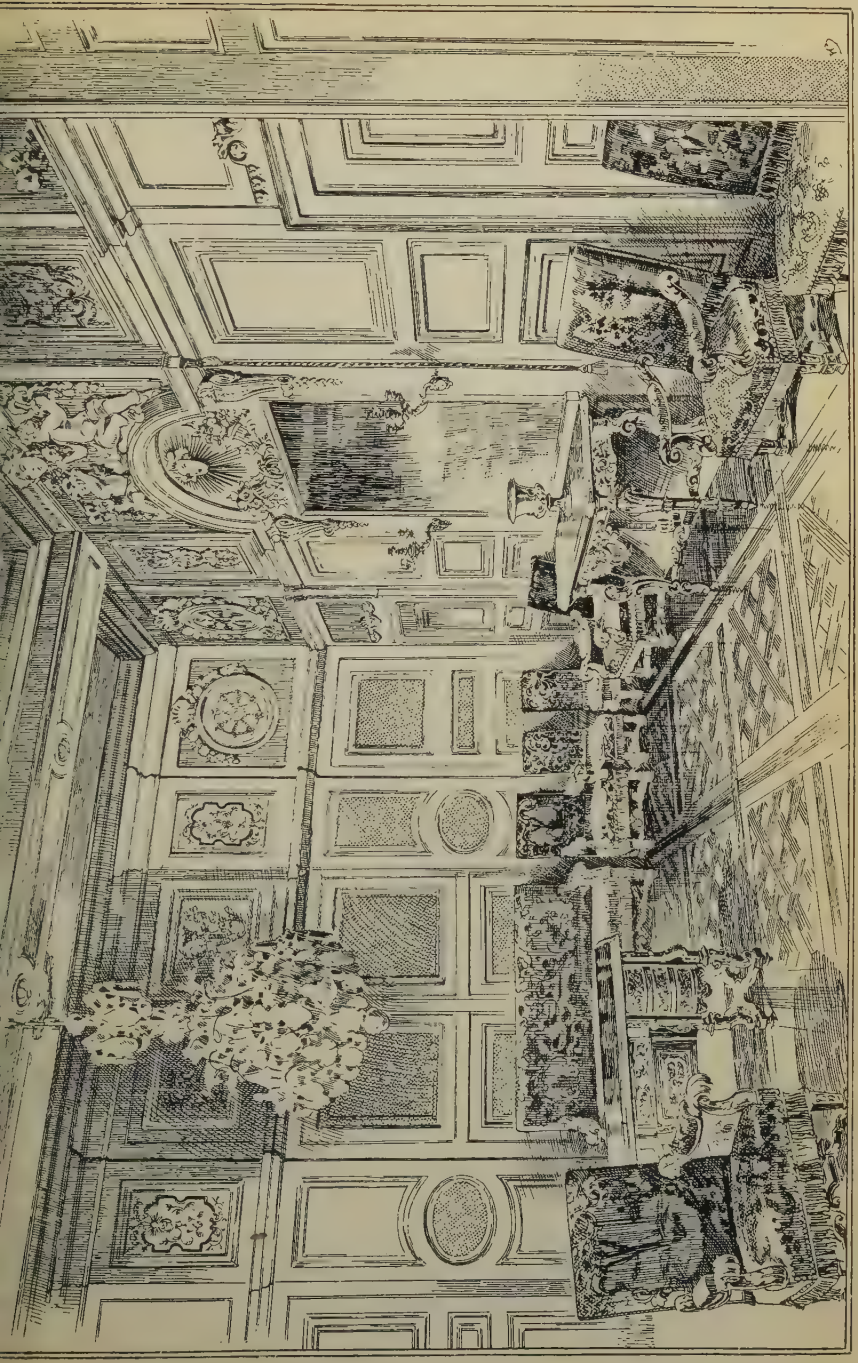
The shape of the chair-arm mostly favoured by the Stuart maker, as illustrated in Figs. 3 and 5, Plate II., and Figs. 1 and 5, Plate III., in the chapter on "Elizabethan"; and in Fig. 2, Plate I., and Fig. 5, Plate II., in the chapter on "Jacobean," is clearly a rough reflection of the French shaping. The under-framing of Fig. 2, Plate II.; and much of Figs. 5 and 7, Plate VI. (both in the chapter on "Jacobean"), are obviously from the same source.

The resemblance in other pieces is so apparent that I need not point it out in detail. True, some of these French ideas of the period only reached us by way of the Netherlands, but they came nevertheless from France in the first place. "But," some reader may urge, "one or two of the features mentioned appeared in England before the 'Louis-Quatorze' became a recognised style." True, but it must be remembered that the "Louis-Quatorze" was only a development of the "Louis-Treize"; the "Louis-Treize" of the "Henri-Deux"; and the "Henri-Deux" of the "Francois-Premier." Each style retained some at least of the characteristics of those that preceded it. So that problem is easily solved.

The question of the relationship subsisting between the "Queen-Anne" and the style we are now briefly considering may safely be left for the student to "ferret out" for himself, and the task will call for no great keenness of scent. Let him compare most of the table-legs illustrated in the chapter on the former with those of the table shown in Fig. 2, Plate I., and he will be face to face with one feature which will demonstrate that point most effectually. Other resemblances, which cannot have been accidental, may easily be discovered by a comparative examination of the respective plates.

After studying the examples selected to illustrate this chapter, it will be apparent that, in its earlier stages, the "Louis-Quatorze" chair was somewhat stiff and severe in appearance—though most dignified. The straight line predominated in its general form, precisely as in our own "Elizabethan" and "Jacobean"; but later the curvilinear element commenced to make its appearance, and eventually succeeded in obtaining the upper hand, resulting in the creation of the distinct and individual style that followed.

Plate III. will convey some idea of a complete interior of the period in question. The panelling in this case is comparatively simple, though the emblematical sun, with its



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powerful divergent beams, clearly indicates for whom the apartment was designed. The furniture, to which this painted and gilded woodwork forms a setting, calls for no special comment beyond that already made, save that I may point out that a comparison of the legs of the pier table with some of the earlier forms of the "Chippendale" chair leg, may be instituted with results both interesting and instructive.

In concluding this chapter, and before proceeding to review the "Louis-Quinze," I must reiterate what I have previously written upon what may be regarded in the study of early French work as a puzzling confusion in style. It must, I repeat, be fully understood that changes in style were not, by any manner of means, exactly coincident with changes in monarchy; while one style was at its zenith the seeds of that which was destined to follow had been sown, and were steadily germinating and fructifying. It is in this way that forms which we now regard as "Louis-Quinze," for instance, are found to have been designed and made at a time considerably prior to the period with which that mode is generally associated. The "Louis-Seize" bed is found in the bedroom of one of the favourites of Louis the Fifteenth, and so on; and to draw a hard-and-fast line of demarcation is quite impossible. We can only class characteristics with certainty, and must not be guided altogether by dates.

# THE "LOUIS-QUINZE"

WHETHER we agree or not with the idea that the character of a man, or of a nation, may be, in a certain measure, gauged from the character of his or their domestic surroundings, certain it is that the theory advanced receives striking demonstration in the styles in decoration and furniture which were originated and prevailed in France during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as well as during the earlier years of the nineteenth. The reign of Louis the Fourteenth, at the work of which we have glanced in the preceding chapter, was one of national reorganisation and empire building; conquests abroad, and the rehabilitation of affairs at home, were the order of the day, and these were accompanied by a spectacular display of pomp and magnificence of which the complete history never has been, and probably never will be, written. It was pomp and magnificence in the fullest sense of the words; for, while the eye was delighted with the splendours by which the court and all that appertained to national affairs were surrounded, the delight was ever tinged to a greater or less degree by a sensation of awe and oppression at the magnitude of it all. The spirit of domination and triumph pervaded the whole "setting," and it seemed to be the one particular aim of the artist, as well as of the statesman, to emphasise and perpetuate that theme to the utmost, doing all that was within his power to make it agreeable to the senses. Dumas sums up this phase of the matter admirably in writing of Versailles—that masterpiece of Mansart, Le Brun, and Le Nôtre—when he says: "Louis the Fourteenth, the creator of etiquette, a system which shut up each individual within bounds beyond which he could not

pass, desired that those initiated into the magnificence of his regal life should be struck with such veneration that ever afterwards they could only regard the palace as a temple and the King as a presiding deity." And what a word-picture he paints of the royal palace, in which was materialised, so to express it, the very spirit of the reign. "Versailles," he writes, "like everything really great, is, and will long be, a fair and lovely scene. Though moss should cover its mouldering walls, though its gods of marble, bronze, and lead lie shattered around their broken fountains, though its broad alleys of clipped trees should remain in all the wild luxuriance of nature, though it should become but a heap of ruins, it will always present to the thinker and the poet a great and touching spectacle. Let such look from its circle of ephemeral splendour to the eternal horizon beyond, and it will be long ere thought and fancy sink to rest again. . . Versailles" (at the commencement of the reign of Louis the Fifteenth) "was fair to look upon, when its gay and thoughtless population, restrained by the crowd of soldiers still more gay than themselves, thronged its gilded gates, when carriages lined with velvet and satin, blazoned with armorial bearings, thundered over its pavements at the full speed of their prancing steeds, when every window, blazing with light like those of an enchanted palace, exposed to view the moving throng, radiant with diamonds, rubies, sapphires, and bending to the gesture of one man, as bends before the wind a field of golden corn with its flowers of crimson, white, and blue. Yes, Versailles was brilliant indeed when its gates sent forth couriers to all the Powers of the earth, when kings, princes, nobles, generals, learned men, from all parts of the civilised world, trod its rich carpets and its inlaid floors! But when, for some great ceremony, all its sumptuous furniture was displayed and its sumptuousness doubled by the magic of a thousand lights, even the coldest imagination must have glowed on beholding what human invention and power could do."

With all this, Louis the Fourteenth was far from contemptuous of the lighter pleasures of life; he indulged in them freely, particularly at the commencement of his reign, and let nothing stand in the way of the satisfaction of his desires in that direction. In the palace at Versailles he was, to all intents and purposes, a deity; but in his leisure moments, even *Le Grand Monarque* deigned to be a man, and, as a relief from the overwhelming splendour of the court, he caused the Trianon to be erected to serve as a place wherein he could take his ease and breathe more freely. But, withal, he simply indulged in his pleasures by way of relaxation from sterner duties, and did not permit them to interfere too seriously with the attainment of the great object he had in view—the aggrandisement of France, and of himself at the same time; it would be difficult to say which came first in his estimation. His ministers and courtiers—had they known them—might well have uttered the Gilbertian words:—

> "Duty, duty must be done;
> The rule applies to every one.
> And, painful though the duty be,
> To shirk the task were fiddle-de-dee!"

They knew that whatever respite they might be permitted to enjoy, must first be earned—that is to say, if they played any part in the manning of the ship of State. Does not the inanimate furniture of the period even convey an impression of all this? The very chairs seem to say: "Here we stand, ready for *use*. We may, perhaps, overpower you somewhat by our stately dignity, but you may sit upon us when you absolutely require rest from your duties; but remember we must be regarded with respect." That, at all events, is what they say to the writer.

On the decease of *Le Roi Soleil* in 1715, and the accession of his infant grandson, with the effeminate Philip of

Orleans as Regent, with his rouge pots, essences, and cosmetics, what a change came over the scene. Of Philip, history tells us that he was handsome in person, amiable in disposition, and more effeminate than his brother Louis the Fourteenth. His mother, Anne of Austria, who would have been rejoiced to have had a daughter, almost found in this, her favourite son, the attentions, solicitude, and playful manner of a child of twelve years of age. The time which he passed with his mother he employed in admiring her arms, in giving his opinion upon her cosmetics, and receipts for compounding essences; he kissed her hands and eyes in the most endearing manner, and always had some sweetmeats to offer her, or some new style of dress to recommend.

These personal details may appear to be unimportant, and to savour somewhat of society small talk, but they are really of moment to us, as they convey a graphic impression of the man who had so much to do with forming the character of the new sovereign, and thus left his mark upon the whole of the reign. Thus it was that Louis the Fifteenth developed into a man of a mould entirely different from that of his august grandfather; and to so great an extent, indeed, that more than one credible history sums him up as being a debauched and feeble-minded monarch whose follies and extravagances were largely accountable for the storm that forced his harmless and lovable successor to the guillotine in the dread "ninety-three." The sword of Achilles had fatigued even Achilles himself, but it was an insupportable burden to his puny successor, to whom even the more homely and reposeful environment of the Trianon, which realised the ideal of comfort to Louis the Fourteenth, was unbearably oppressive. Consequently, in order to accord with his less ambitious wishes, the Little Trianon was erected, after designs by Gabriel, and became the king's favourite residence.

The keynote of the reign, then, was effeminacy, and it is

that quality which we shall naturally find predominates in the work of those whose living depended upon their pleasing, and by pleasing securing the patronage of, the members of the court. Let it not be inferred for one moment that I employ the word "effeminacy" in its association with arts of the times as a term of reproach, however it may be regarded in other walks of life; nothing could be further from my intention. "Effeminacy," we are told by the dictionary, means "womanish softness and delicacy"; and what more delightful quality could we have in the home to lighten the struggle and turmoil of the average daily existence? Stately dignity and sturdy simplicity may be all very well in their way; and, theoretically, we may hold the ancient Spartan models of training and general deportment in the highest reverence, and quote them, in inspiriting accents, to members of the rising generation. But how delightful it is, sometimes, to throw oneself on to a heap of downy cushions—"effeminate" cushions. This may not sound heroic. It is not; but it is a sentiment with which I know the vast majority of my readers will agree. As to our own furniture of olden days, greatly as we admire those sturdy "Elizabethan" and "Jacobean" forms, and love to look at them as they grace our collections of treasures, we hardly select them as asylums of repose when we are in need of rest. If we be forced to do so because other more comfortable seats are occupied, how heartily we wish that a greater measure of "effeminacy" had been instilled into the furniture of our early progenitors. It is wonderful what a few deft touches by a woman's hand will do where questions of comfort have to be decided. Of course, there is effeminacy and effeminacy, but I am not afraid of my meaning being misinterpreted.

Changed as was the monarchy, there was no diminution in the encouragement afforded by the State, as well as by private patrons, to the arts. Indeed, it was increased rather than otherwise, and the workers in the *appartements au Louvre*,

the State factories at Sèvres, and private *ateliers*, were more fully occupied than ever in conceiving and producing beautiful creations for their luxury-loving patrons. The impetus given to the cultivation of the applied arts during the preceding reign—the underlying reasons for, and conditions of, which have been gone into at some length in the last chapter—was still bearing rich fruit, though the growth, character, and flavour of that fruit had changed most materially; and never was the cabinet maker more prolific in ideas than at the time of which I am now writing. So vast was the output, and so varied its description, that to illustrate here even one-thousandth part of all that was done is not to be dreamed of. We shall only be able to glance at leading characteristics, and to acquire such knowledge as we can of salient features which will enable us to be in a position to explain *why* certain forms are styled "Louis-Quinze," and to recognise at once any piece that partakes of the chief elements of that mode.

The designers who were responsible for the inception of the "Louis-Quinze," had commenced to tire of the straight line, and of rectangular forms generally. They argued, probably, that as there is not a single rectangle, straight line, or even "compass line," in the human form, and particularly in the female form in its perfection, which in those days above all was regarded as the ideal of beauty, a rigid adherence to those factors was not calculated to lead to the attainment of either perfect comfort or perfect elegance. In consequence of following this course of reasoning, they arrived at the determination to see what could be done by abandoning the straight and rectangular, and cultivating the curvilinear wherever practicable. The requirements of comfort and elegance were carefully studied at the same time, and the furnishing of the palace, the château, and even the modest home, from being stiff and formal, became inviting, and was imbued with a spirit entirely different from that which had, for the most part, previously pervaded it.

What a contrast to the condition of affairs which prevailed throughout the preceding reign, when rest and pleasure came as a relaxation from, but still were regarded as an interruption of, work. Under the indolent sway of Philip of Orleans, and later of the rightful sovereign himself, work seemed to be regarded in the light of an interruption of the pursuit of pleasure—as a necessary evil; and all who could shirk it, by any means whatsoever, *did* shirk it most effectually. The "Louis-Quinze" chair, for instance, with its silent eloquence, tells a story different from that told by its comparatively severe predecessor. It does not grudgingly proffer its services for temporary repose with the suggestion that we shall rise from it with renewed energy for further labours, but tempts us by its sinuous and subtle allurements so hard to be resisted. "Come," it seems to say, "come, my inviting arms and downy softness await you. Why think of work when I am here? Come, and forget all in my embrace. Take your fill of placid enjoyment; throw all else to the winds; and let others work who will." Something purely sensuous, indeed, pervades the whole of the best and most typical "Louis-Quinze," which more than merely reflects the prevailing spirit of the times; it is literally steeped in it in every form and detail. Everywhere we have the bewitching female face—not of the saint, but of the syren—smiling up into ours, and tempting us to linger. Figures are clad in the lightest of light draperies, which accentuate rather than conceal; and the female bust itself, but partially covered if covered at all, is wherever possible brought into undue prominence. Truly, these things constituted a fitting environment for a prince possessed of such predilections as was Louis the Fifteenth.

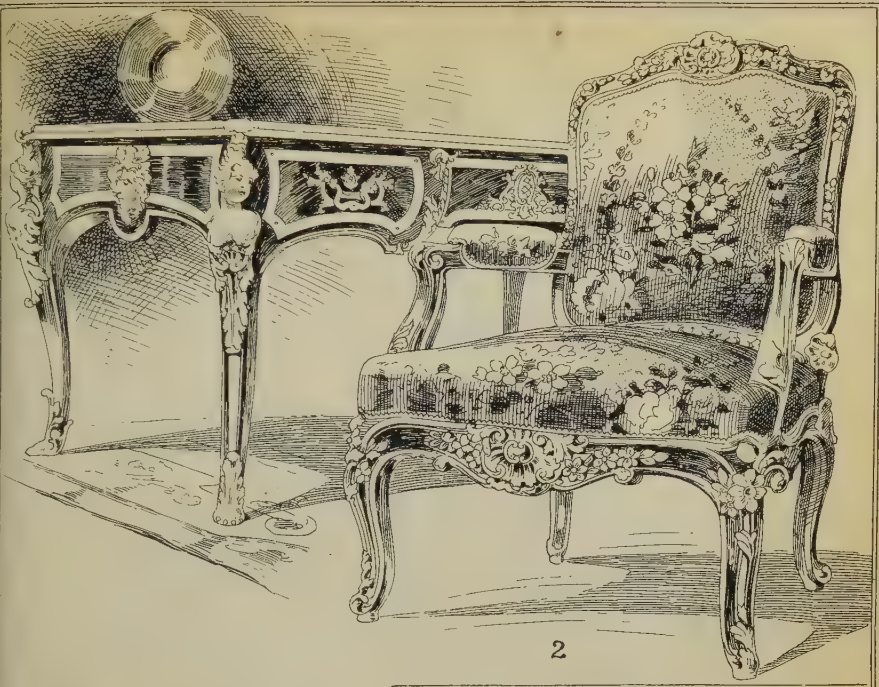
Yet withal, in its highest phases, the "Louis-Quinze" is to my mind beautiful, and is endowed with a rare and peculiar fascination possessed by no other style. Appeal to the senses it does, and that most irresistibly; and as the senses have a good deal to say in the temperaments of most mortals,

there need be but small wonder that this mode, which was created in their honour, should have flourished "like the green bay tree."

It must be remembered particularly, moreover, that other personalities and forces than those I have named were actively at work. The nature of the dictator whose favour and approval were perforce being courted by those to whose hands the beautification of the royal residences was entrusted, was hardly such as to insist upon the adoption of the strictest code of morality in art or in any other regard. The frivolous Marie-Jeanne Vaubernier, when she was first brought under the notice of Louis the Fifteenth by his *valet de chambre*, Lebel, and before her title had been conferred upon her, had, although then only in her "teens," gone through varied experiences of a character from which elevation of the mind or tastes could hardly be expected. After the Marchioness du Pompadour, she became all powerful in the kingdom; and her word in everything, from the appointment of a minister to the acquisition of a pet puppy, was supreme. Architects, painters, poets, playwrights, musicians, sculptors, goldsmiths, cabinet makers, upholsterers, decorators, metal workers, and all other disciples of the fine and applied arts, anxious to secure the patronage of the court, submitted their schemes to her, or to officials appointed by her, who would study her preferences in every particular. It was inevitable, therefore, that the art of the period should reflect the tastes of the erstwhile *grisette*, but then it was the taste of the *grisette* glorified by the master minds of the age. Truly, in "*La Petite Jeanne*," diminutive though she was in physical stature, the king encountered a spirit that was neither to be daunted nor thwarted. She intended to have her own way, and had it. In the earliest days of her association with her royal lover, she suddenly came to the conclusion that her little Pavilion at Luciennes ought to be created a Royal Residence. The king laughed at the suggestion, but a Royal Residence it became, and her negro page,

Zamore—"something between a monkey and a parrot"—was officially appointed "Governor," with full title, dignities, privileges, and brilliant uniform. There, while urgent affairs of State were awaiting settlement at Versailles, the sovereign would sit, caressed by his fair despot, by the edge of the lake, feeding the royal carp with bread-crumbs, or stuffing the "Governor" with sweetmeats. The presence in office of the Duc de Choiseul, prime minister, patron of the arts, and intimate friend of Voltaire, was obnoxious to Jeanne, who protested that he must "go." The king pooh-poohed the suggestion as altogether out of the question. De Choiseul was a great man; had rendered notable service to the State; he was indispensable; the people would be furious. The Countess pouted, and—the prime minister "went." Even the sovereign's influence could not induce any one of the great ladies of the court to act as sponsor at her Presentation to this woman who, in days gone by, had probably helped to make some of their dresses. Presentation, therefore, was of course impossible. Was it? The Countess du Bearn, a decayed remnant of the old nobility, who had fallen upon evil times, was unearthed by the determined little body, carried to the capital, and liberally paid to act as sponsor. Jeanne was presented. On the plea of illness the great ladies absented themselves from the function, in order to show their displeasure. "So much the worse," said the king, when informed that they were ill; and the words were uttered in a tone that suggested the unuttered, "for them."

Cannot we picture this imperious little woman, with her "light chestnut hair, skin of white satin, veined with azure; eyes at one moment *spirituelle*, and at another languishing; a little roseate mouth, with rows of pearls; dimples everywhere, and a figure marked by a certain *embonpoint* with the pliancy of a snake." Might we not apply the concluding words of that description to many of the furnishing forms by which she loved to surround herself?



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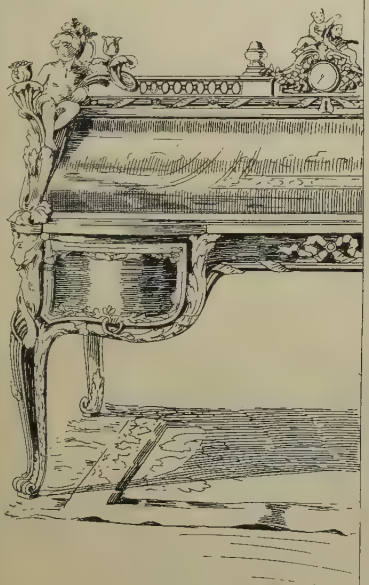

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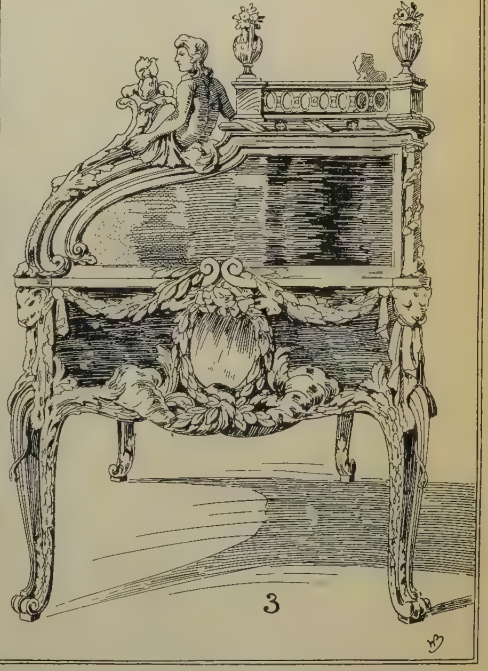

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| Fig. 1. | See 244 |
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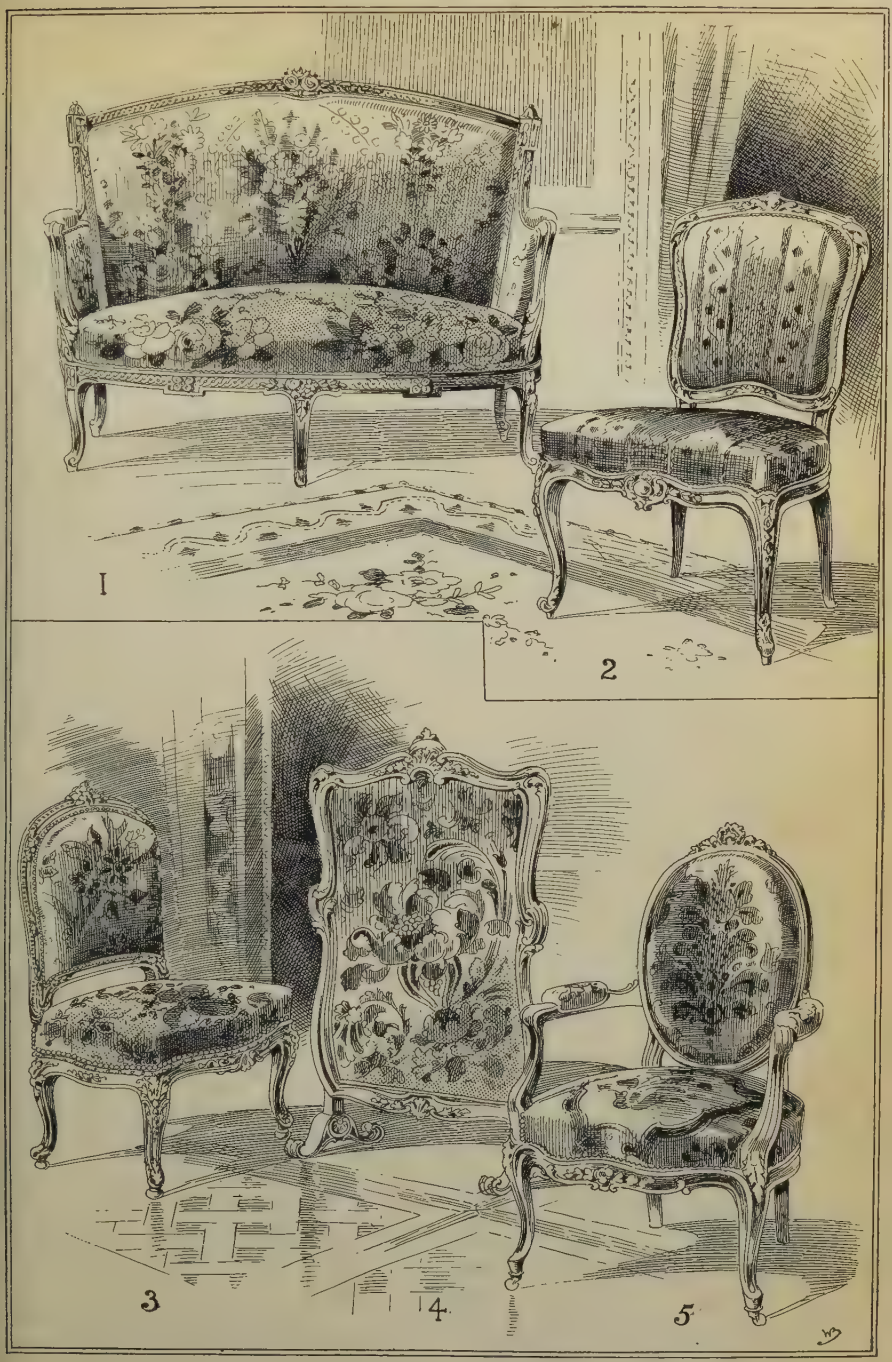
These reminiscences will serve to remind the reader of the fact that the times were not remarkable for lofty aspirations of earnest endeavour; but in everything the satisfaction of the senses was placed before the cultivation of the intellect, though the intellect was, of course, cultivated in so far as it could be brought to minister to the more carnal appetites. It cannot be urged that the influence of the Comtesse du Barri was in any degree inferior to that of any other of the king's favourites; for his Majesty's choice of companionship throughout was directed by the dictates of his own weak and libidinous disposition. It is remarkable and significant that, whereas the names which stand out most prominently during the preceding reign as those of men of colossal genius are the names of those who were employing their powers for the glorification of the monarchy, under Louis the Fifteenth the giant intellects seem to have been intent upon its demolition. François-Marie Arouet de Voltaire had, for instance, more than once full opportunity of judging from personal experience the efficiency of the system adopted in the Bastille for the repression of treason; and saw his works publicly burned by the decree of Parliament. "Jean-Jacques," instead of singing the praises of the Bourbons and writing triumphal marches in their honour, was busily engaged upon his "Contrât Social." Marat was fanning the flames of the revolutionary spirit with all the energy with which nature had endowed his strangely warped intellect, and Joseph-Ignatius Guillotin, M.D., was perfecting his gruesome working drawings, and testing his weights and levers. So I might continue, with reminiscence after reminiscence, but enough has been written to refresh the memory of the reader with regard to the influences at work when the furnishings were produced which we are now considering.

Let us see, then, in what particular directions the character of French furniture became metamorphosed under these prevailing conditions. A glance at the whole of the examples

illustrated in this chapter will fully justify my assertion to the effect that the reign of the straight line had terminated for a time and had been supplanted by that of the curvilinear; and an examination of the pieces in detail will bear out many more of my contentions put forward in this and the preceding chapter. The most important example perhaps of all those presented is the writing-table, indicated in Fig. 3, Plate I., which is known and treasured in the Louvre as "*Le Bureau du Roi*," and was designed and made for Louis the Fifteenth by Boulle's pupil Oeben, in collaboration with his own favourite apprentice Riesener. (Riesener, in after years, married his master's widow, succeeded to the business, and became very wealthy; though he, again, like Boulle, died practically in a state of penury.) The form of this piece, although free in comparison with those of earlier times, exhibits that comparative restraint which characterised the earlier "Louis-Quinze," and the grace which it undeniably possesses is not unmixed with dignity. Regarded from the technical standpoint, as a piece of cabinet work it is as near perfection as possible, while the *ormolu* mounts are simply superb. As we are considering this "Louis-Quinze" furniture more particularly with a view of ascertaining how far the English designers and craftsmen of the eighteenth century were indebted to it for inspiration, I may point out here that the "cylinder top" was not generally employed in this country in articles of this kind until the time of Heppelwhite and Sheraton, and it is not unreasonable to surmise that they borrowed that idea, as they did many others, from this style. In the table, Fig. 1, Plate I., we have a model similar in feeling, but rather more free in character than "*Le Bureau du Roi*," and closely resembling one illustrated in the preceding chapter. This study furnishes a capital demonstration of the employment of the coquettish female head, a feature already referred to; also of the prominence given to the bust. The whole, indeed, is suggestive of the "certain

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| Figs. 1, 3–5. | See 245 |
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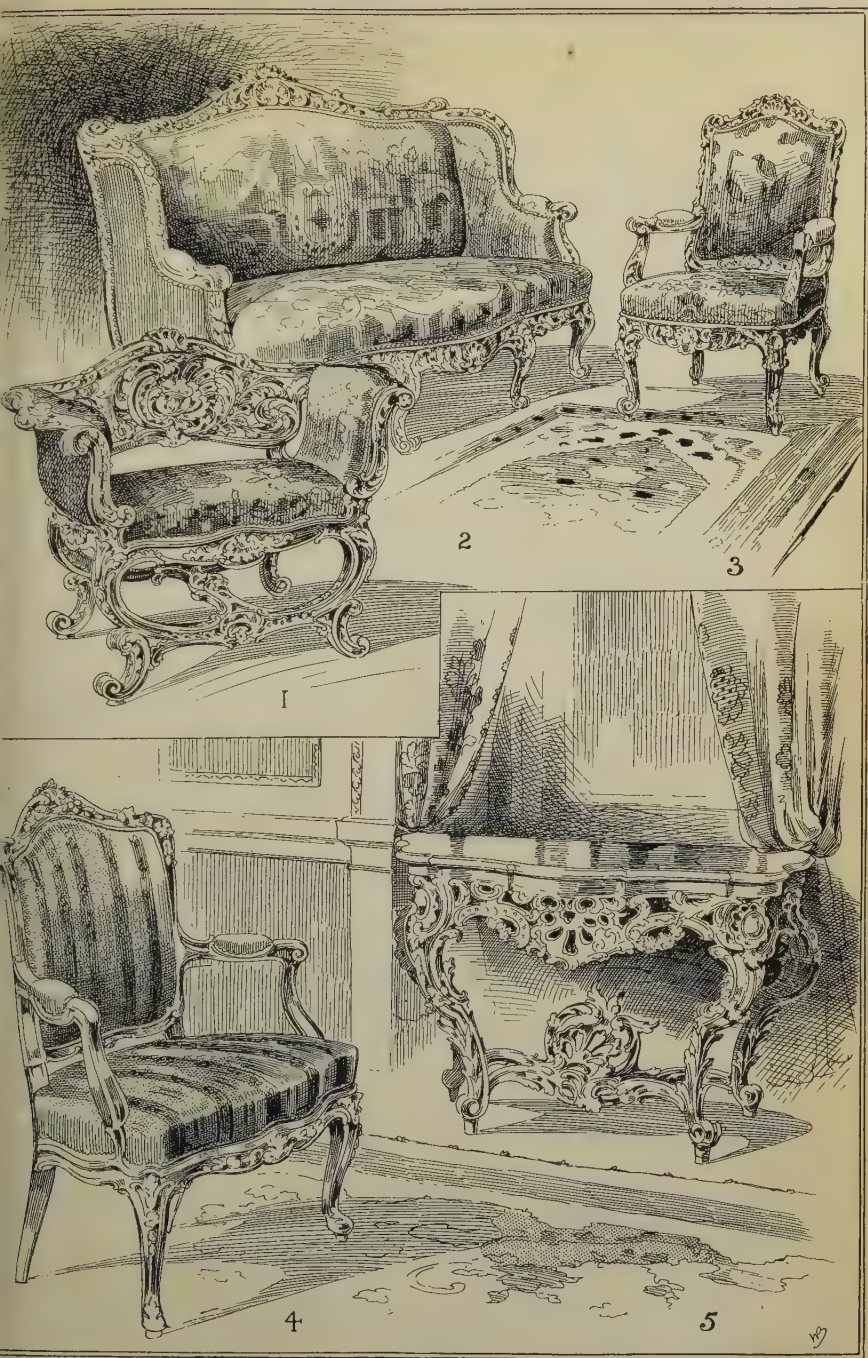
*embonpoint*" and "pliancy of the snake." But as time went on, the curves became more and more accentuated, and graceful shaping, whose very subtlety was its great charm, gave way to more pronounced and somewhat vulgar emphasis, and a superabundance of meaningless elaboration—as in the pier-table, Fig. 5, Plate III. (with which may be compared Fig. 4, Plate VIII., and the table on Plate IX., "Chippendale"), and the pier-table, Fig. 4, Plate IV., which, however, is not quite so extravagant an example. Keeping Fig. 5, Plate III., in mind, the reader may well turn to the chapter on "Chippendale," and note the corners of the lower part of the larger press or wardrobe, Plate I.; the legs of the chairs, Plate III.; the chair-legs and screen, Plate IV.; the lower secrétaire, Plate V.; the lower arm-chair, Plate IX.; and other pieces dotted about here and there which it is not needful to particularise, for the nearness of the relationship is too apparent to need emphasising. This is particularly noticeable when we examine the chairs shown on the accompanying plates. The legs, in many cases, are almost identical, and as the French models were earlier in the field, there can be no question as to the source from which Chippendale secured his inspiration. All the chairs illustrated here are perfectly typical "Louis-Quinze," though the sofa, or settee, Fig. 1, Plate II., is a late example, almost verging upon the "Louis-Seize." Figs. 1 and 2, Plate III., are more or less modern renderings. The frames of "Louis-Quinze" chairs were almost invariably gilded in every part, or painted in the most delicate tones of white, cream, blue, or green, and touched up with gold; the colouring, where colour was employed, being of so light a shade as to be hardly distinguishable. The coverings were of figured silk, chiefly from Lyons; brocades, choice embroideries, or tapestries from Gobelins, Beauvais, or Aubusson. The designs woven into these latter were usually free and floral in character, as in Fig. 2, Plate I.; Figs. 1, 3, and 5, Plate II.; Figs. 1 and 3, Plate III.; and Figs. 1 and 3,

Plate IV.; though the "stripe" was also popular, as in Fig. 2, Plate II., and Fig. 4, Plate III.

In a previous chapter I have said that Heppelwhite and Sheraton were not influenced to any very great extent by the "Louis-Quinze"; but that they were amenable to its fascination now and again may be gathered by another look at some of the chair and sofa arms employed by them, and by a glance at the arms which predominate in the accompanying examples. The reader may also refresh his memory on the question of the relationship between the three styles—"Louis-Quinze," "Heppelwhite," and "Sheraton"—by again referring to the chapter on "Heppelwhite," and noting the chair-back, Fig. 6, Plate I., Fig. 9, Plate II.; the pier-table, Fig. 10, Plate III.; the stool, Fig. 2, and the sofa, Fig. 7, Plate VIII.; and the dressing-chest on Plate IX. Sheraton was, to all intents and purposes, guiltless in this respect, though by no means in others, as we have already noted, and shall note again.

While dealing with the furniture of the reign of Louis the Fifteenth, we must not omit to call to mind the fact that when the reign was nearing its close there appeared in the field of art industry one of the greatest *fondeurs-ciseleurs* the world has ever seen or is likely to see—I refer, of course, to Gouthière. This great artist-craftsman was born in 1740, and was therefore only thirty-four years of age at the time of the king's decease; but he displayed rare ability early in life, and when but a stripling was working hand-in-hand with the most notable cabinet makers of his time. To him are to be attributed some of the most magnificent mounts that ever graced cabinet, chair, or table; but as he proved his skill more extensively in the "Louis-Seize" than in the preceding style, lengthy comment upon his work is not called for here. It may, however, be mentioned in passing that among the innovations which he brought about Gouthière laid claim to having been the first to introduce the "dead gold" finish that endows

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so much of this old French brass work with such subtle and yet so great charm.

Thomire, born in 1751, was another bright and shining light in the same branch of industry, but he continued his labours to a period thirty-seven years after Gouthière, who died in 1806, having been brought to such straits that, history tells us, "il était réduit à solliciter une place à l'hospice; il mourut dans la misère." Thomire had much to do, not only with the "Louis-Seize," but also with the "Empire" metal work, with which we have yet to deal.

The names of Lamour, Lalonde, Gabriel, Heré, Gamain, Caffieri, Peneau, Cressent, and Duplessis may also be mentioned, for all shone brilliantly under one or another of the Louis, but lack of space renders it impossible to give individual examples of the work of every one of them here.

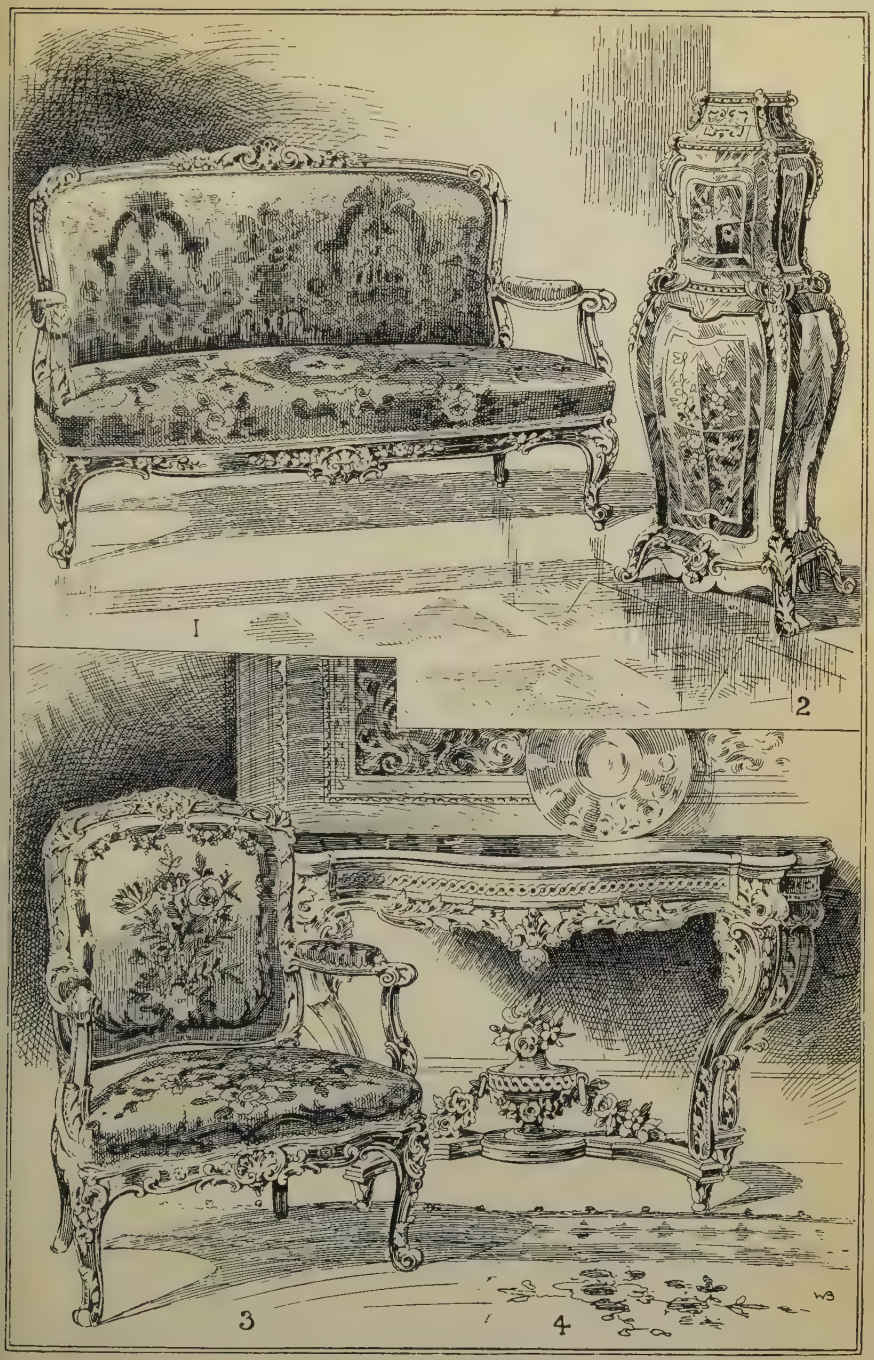
It is very curious that the French cabinet maker of the times of which I am writing did not avail himself to any great extent of marquetry for the enrichment of his productions, if we except, of course, the tortoiseshell and metal incrustations of the Boulles. Such inlay as was employed—an example is given in Fig. 2, Plate IV.—was of a comparatively simple character, and, when not floral in design, consisted chiefly of diaper patterns composed of tiny pieces of veneer—principally amaranth, tulip, rosewood, laburnum, and maple. These diapers were frequently introduced as a background for floral schemes, and were brought to great perfection by Riesener, among other *marqueteurs*, during the prevalence of the succeeding style. The effect obtained by this inlay is rich though subdued, and decidedly pleasing, often having somewhat the appearance of a "bloom," though it cannot be admitted that it ever possessed the great charm associated with that which became popular in this country a few years later through the encouragement of Heppelwhite and Sheraton.

There is yet another name which must be mentioned while

we are considering this style, and it is that of Antoine Watteau, who, although not a cabinet maker in any sense of the word, exercised considerable influence over the decorative work of the period by the persistent cultivation of that particular class of pictorial subject which, ever since his day, has been associated with his name.

Commencing his career as a scene-painter under the famous Gillot, he soon gave ample proof that the making of a master was in him, and worked his way up with so much determination that it was not long before he received the appointment of "Painter to the King" (Louis the Fourteenth). During the reign of George the First he came over to England with the intention of settling here, but his health suffered so seriously in our climate that he was obliged to return to his own country, where he worked until his death in 1721—seven years after the accession of Louis the Fifteenth. A scenic or theatrical feeling was always associated with the work of Watteau, and when regarding his military studies of camp life, or his still more popular pastoral creations, with their frisking lambs, coy and coquettish shepherdesses, and love-sick swains, we almost instinctively listen for some concealed orchestra to break into the strains of a rollicking drinking song, "chorus of villagers," or amorous duet.

Pastoral paintings, after Watteau and Boucher, constituted a great feature in the productions of the famous Martin family, to whose work a few words must be devoted here. Originally a coach painter by trade—and in those days even coaches were veritable works of art—Guillaume Martin and his three sons, Simon-Etienne, Julien, and Robert, *maîtres-peintres et vernisseurs*, devoted themselves to the improvement of varnishes and lacquers as applied to cabinet work. They did much to perfect the transparent lac varnish, and worked largely in that beautiful green varnish, powdered with gold, which is now generally known as "Vernis-Martin," and was employed extensively as a background, or "field," for such

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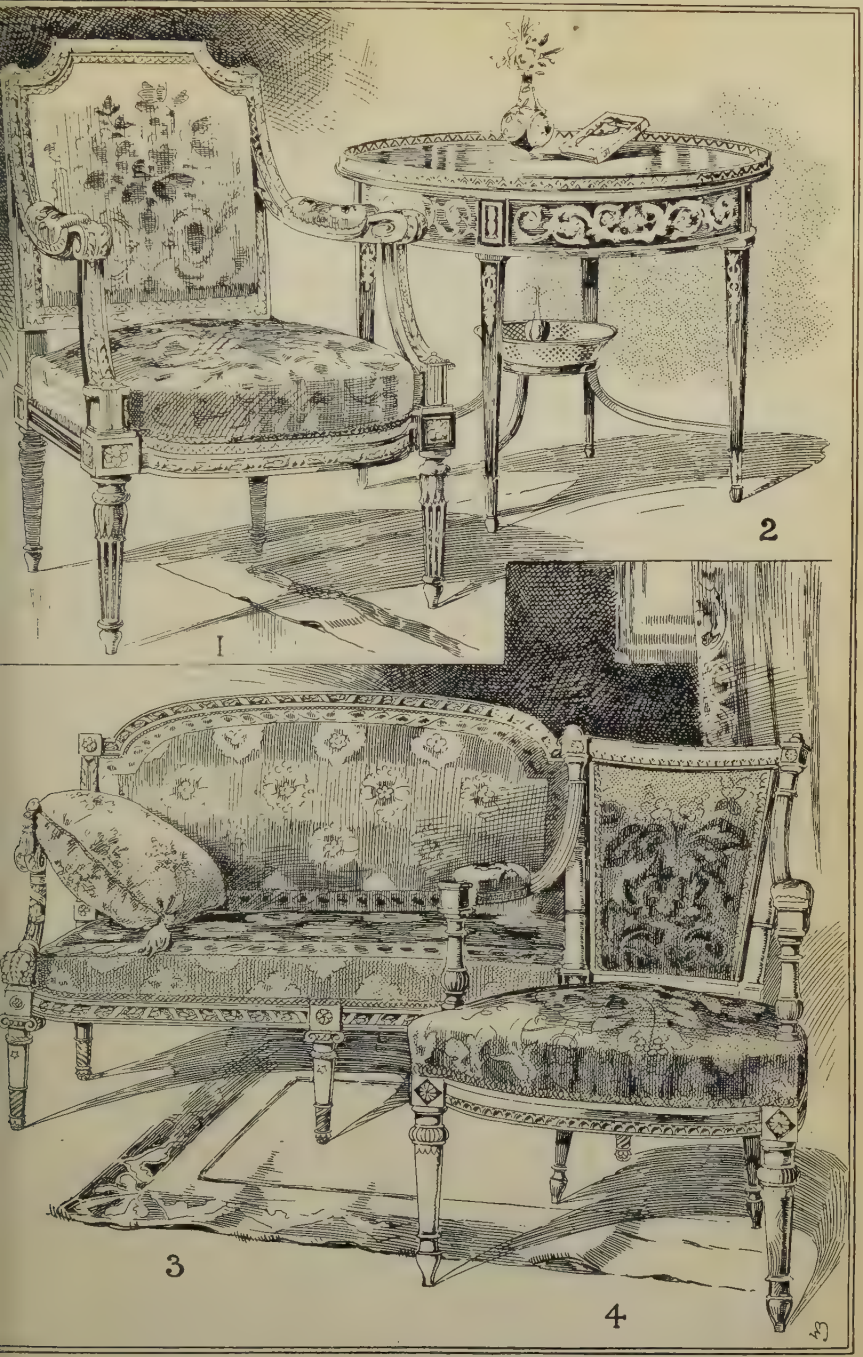
dainty brush work as that to which I have referred. The introduction of the "Martin" preparations and methods of application made it practicable to enrich furniture with the choicest and most delicate paintings without fear of their coming to harm; and so highly were the innovations made by the family in this direction esteemed by those in authority that, in the year 1730, Guillaume and Simon-Etienne were accorded the sole right, for twenty years, of making "toutes sortes d'ouvrage en relief de la Chine et du Japon," and the brevet was further confirmed and extended in 1744. The Martins, throughout their career, cultivated the decoration of coaches, sedan-chairs, and similar vehicles, as well as that of furniture, wall-panelling, and the like. Indeed, "Vernis-Martin" may be regarded as ranking among the most important features of the furniture of this period.

With the foregoing comments we must leave the "Louis Quinze"; but, before doing so, the reader may well ponder again over the examples presented here, institute a mental comparison between them and the forms based upon them which appeared later in this country, and then debate in his mind the question whether the spirit of luxurious sensuality has been so materially expressed, through the medium of wood, metal, and textile fabrics, in any other age or country, before or since, as it was in France during the days of the Pompadours and Du Barrys. We may attempt to copy the "Louis-Quinze," as we *have* attempted in the past; we may imbibe some of its qualities, as we have done and may still succeed in doing: but to expect the British nature to interpret the style as it was in the land of its birth in its best and palmiest days, with all its rare, subtle, and sinuous grace, is to look for a moral impossibility. It is not the skill of the British artist and craftsman that is wanting in this regard, but his very nature and temperament, for the possession of which he cannot be blamed.

## THE "LOUIS-SEIZE"

WHILE all those influences were at work in France which led to the ultimate debasement of the "Louis-Quinze," others also were active in a totally opposite direction. By the death of his father in 1765, the future king became heir to the throne, and, in 1770, the marriage was arranged and consummated between him and the beautiful Marie-Antoinette, Archduchess of Austria, who was at that time only fifteen years of age. Thus it happened that while, on the one hand, the wildest extravagances were being encouraged by the ruling monarch, his favourite, and her satellites, the destined ruler, disinclined by nature to find relaxation in the licentious debaucheries of the court, was exploring the sciences and mending his locks, happy in the congenial companionship of his young but rarely cultured partner. The presence of this dauphiness as a prominent figure in such a scene presents a picture of refinement set amidst ribaldry, culture hemmed in by chicanery, love surrounded by lust; but she held aloof from the less desirable associations and companionships, and, fortunately for her, found a kindred spirit in that of her "lord and master."

A delightful glimpse of the daily life of these two, planning their future in the retirement of the Trianon, is gleaned from the pages of Dumas, where he pictures, with his graphic pen a surprise visit paid to them by the king in company with his prime minister; the two discussing the merits of the new bride. The following is a scrap of the conversation; imaginary it may be, but it nevertheless conveys a capital idea of the preferences and temperaments of those who, in

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after years, were to do so much towards re-moulding the arts of the nation :—

"'I have already had the honour to remark,' said Monsieur de Choiseul, 'that Her Royal Highness is accomplished, and requires nothing to make her perfect!'

"On the way, the two travellers found the dauphin standing motionless upon the lawn, measuring the sun's altitude.

"The king said, loudly enough to be heard by his grandson, 'Louis is a finished scholar, but he is wrong thus to run his head against the sciences: his wife will have reason to complain of such conduct.'

"'By no means, sire,' replied a low soft voice, issuing from a thicket.

"And the king saw the dauphiness running towards him. She had been talking to a man furnished with papers, compasses, and chalks.

"'Sire,' said the princess, 'Monsieur Mique, my architect.'

"'Ah!' exclaimed the king; 'then you too are bitten by the mania, madame?'

"'Sire, it runs in the family. . . . You may walk a hundred years in your grounds and you will see nothing but straight alleys or thickets, cut off at an angle of forty-five degrees, as the dauphin says, or pieces of water wedded to perspectives, parterres, or terraces.'

"'Well, come, what will you make of my Trianon?'

"'Rivers, cascades, bridges, grottoes, woods, ravines, houses, mountains, fields.'

"'For dolls,' said the king.

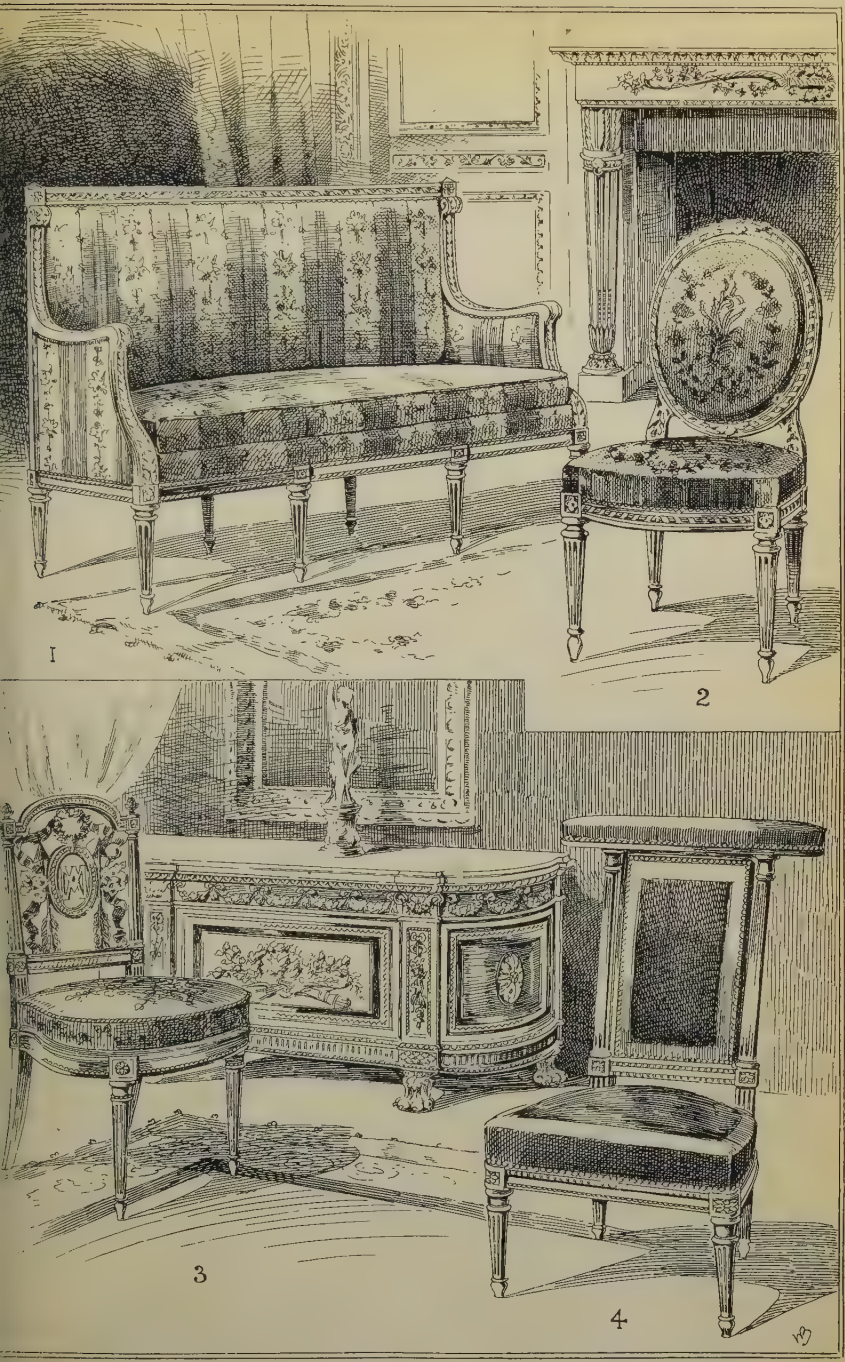
"'Alas, sire! for such kings as we shall be.'"

We now have to consider a third style in old French furniture, and one, withal, which is filled with interest for the earnest student. In the preceding chapters I hope we have been successful in arriving at a fair estimate of the

character of the two earlier styles; of the grandeur of the "Louis-Quatorze," instinct with the spirit of majesty, and of the sinuous beauty of the "Louis-Quinze," with its almost total evasion of the straight line, both as regards conduct and contour. It is now incumbent upon us to pursue our studies still further and see what followed the apotheosis of luxury and licentiousness which we have just reviewed.

It need not be pointed out, of course, that many of the artists and craftsmen who did their best to please the tastes of the Comtesse du Barry were endeavouring, towards the end of her supremacy, also to win the favour of the dauphin and dauphiness, whose predilections were as remote in every respect from those of the royal favourite as the two poles. These artists and craftsmen, of course, recognised this; they saw that the extravagances of the reign then rapidly drawing to its close would meet with but small favour in that which was to follow; so they set themselves the task of exploring fresh woods and pastures new, determining at all costs to strike out for themselves, so far as lay within their power, an entirely novel line. What was the outcome?

From ostentatious, and to a certain extent vulgar, display, the pendulum swung back to the other extreme, and a more severe spirit of chaste refinement made itself apparent, for the sudden and unexpected development of which it is difficult to account if we leave the tastes and influence of the young dauphin and dauphiness out of our calculations—as some would have us do. It is practically impossible to trace with any degree of thoroughness the origin and operation of all the agencies which had been silently at work to bring this change about, and we can only speak with certainty of the tangible results that are to be credited to their account. Those results, which it will now be our task to consider, made the reign of Louis the Sixteenth and Marie-Antoinette, brief as it was, rank among the brightest in the history of French art.

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The reader is already aware that my sole object in touching on French styles at all is simply to bring to light the original source from which the eighteenth-century English cabinet maker drew the greater part of his inspiration; to show the extent to which Chippendale, his contemporaries, and successors, appropriated ideas from the other side of the Channel. This has, in a certain measure, been indicated in the chapters devoted to our own eighteenth-century work, as also in our study of the "Louis-Quatorze" and "Louis-Quinze"; but we shall now be able to note more fully how far the productions of the designers referred to were the creations of their own brains, and to see how much was "inspired."

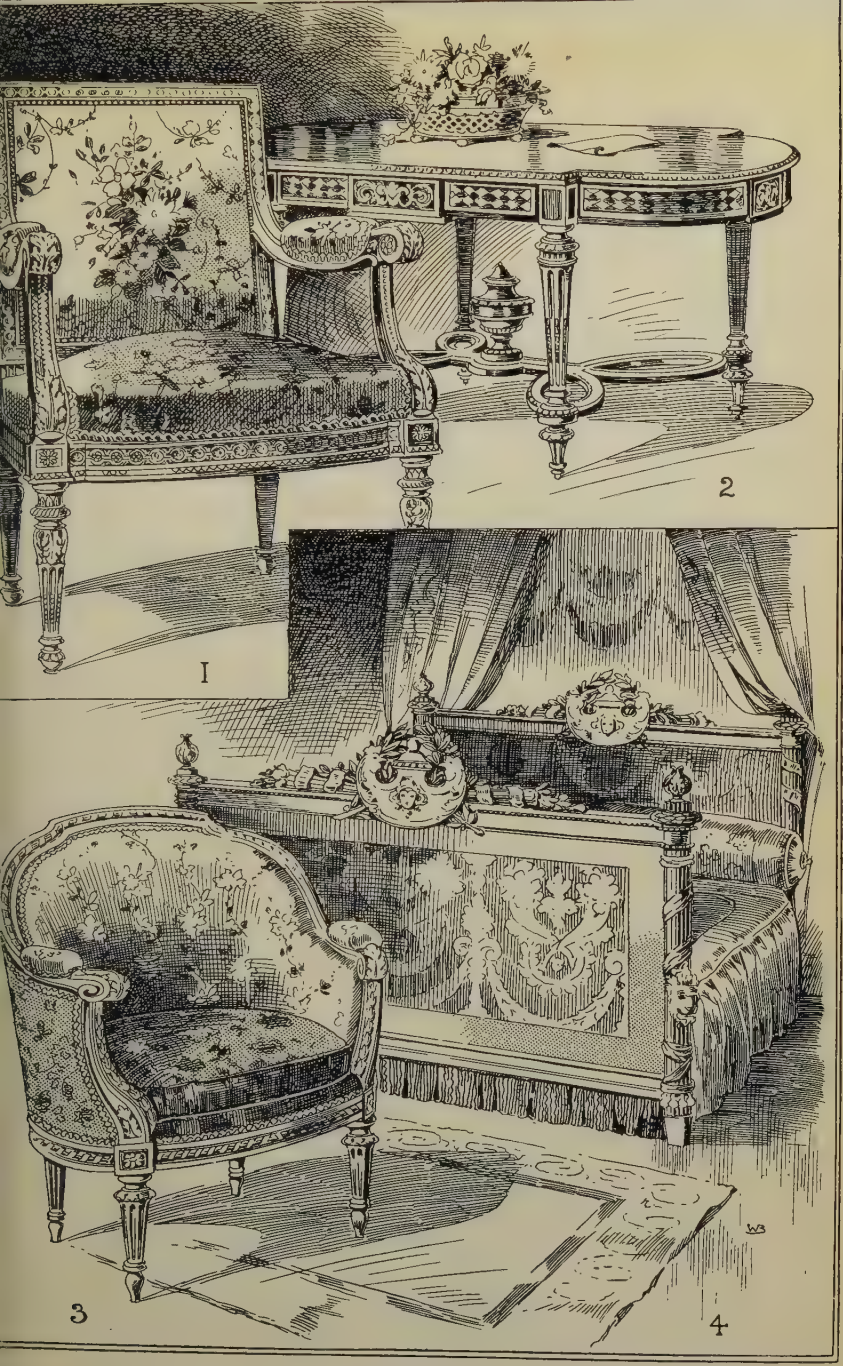
The more deeply we study the history of past ages the more firmly convinced we become of the fact that, in art as in other walks of life, it is inherent in human nature to go sometimes to extremes; but we generally find that matters readjust themselves sooner or later; at all events it has almost invariably so happened. From the very earliest times of which we possess any authentic record it has been so. The severity of the "Egyptian," "Assyrian," and "Greek," was supplanted by the heavy and redundant splendour of the "Roman," the very gorgeousness of which was almost too much for the eye to support. After that, reaction soon set in, and the "Roman" in its turn was superseded by the simpler and symbolic "Byzantine," which again was itself destined to have as a successor its very antithesis, the "Renascimento," "Cinque-cento," or "Renaissance."

In a similar manner, in English furniture, the rich carving —"François-Premier" to all intents and purposes—of the time of Henry the Eighth was supplanted by the simpler "strap-work" of the "Elizabethan"; then came the somewhat crude productions of the "Jacobean," the severe "Cromwellian," with its straight lines, refined mouldings, and dearth of ornamentation; the "Queen-Anne," born of French

and Dutch parentage, and eventually another revolution, resulting in the production of "Chippendale," "Heppelwhite," and "Sheraton," and finally of our debased rendering of the "Empire."

Contrasts similarly marked are to be traced in the old French styles as we pass them in review, and in the "Louis-Seize," with which we are now about to deal, we find, as I have already indicated, a distinct departure from every one of the modes that led up to it. Garishness is once more banished by good taste; eccentricity gives place to excellence; sensible construction is in no circumstances sacrificed to ornamental elaboration; and, instead of riotous extravagance being in evidence everywhere, calm and beautiful restfulness reigns supreme. It is really most remarkable and interesting to note the fixed determination with which these old French designers of the "Louis-Seize" set aside all prevalent traditions, and relied upon their own ingenuity to attain the end they had in view. In order to appreciate the extent to which they did this, the reader need not do more than compare the types accompanying this chapter with those shown in the two preceding ones. By so doing it will be made apparent that hardly a single detail, or even the mere suggestion of a detail, common to the styles that went before is retained, so far as ornament is concerned, while general construction is completely revolutionised.

It may be laid down as a guiding principle for the help of the student that the "Louis-Seize" depends in a very great degree upon ornamental enrichment for its character; shorn of that, the examples we shall consider—and they are the most typical in every respect which we could select—would possess but meagre interest. Most of the constructional forms are simple almost to severity, though, be it noted, they are almost without exception well proportioned and graceful in the extreme. It is in this respect above all others that the style differs from the "Louis-Quinze"; and

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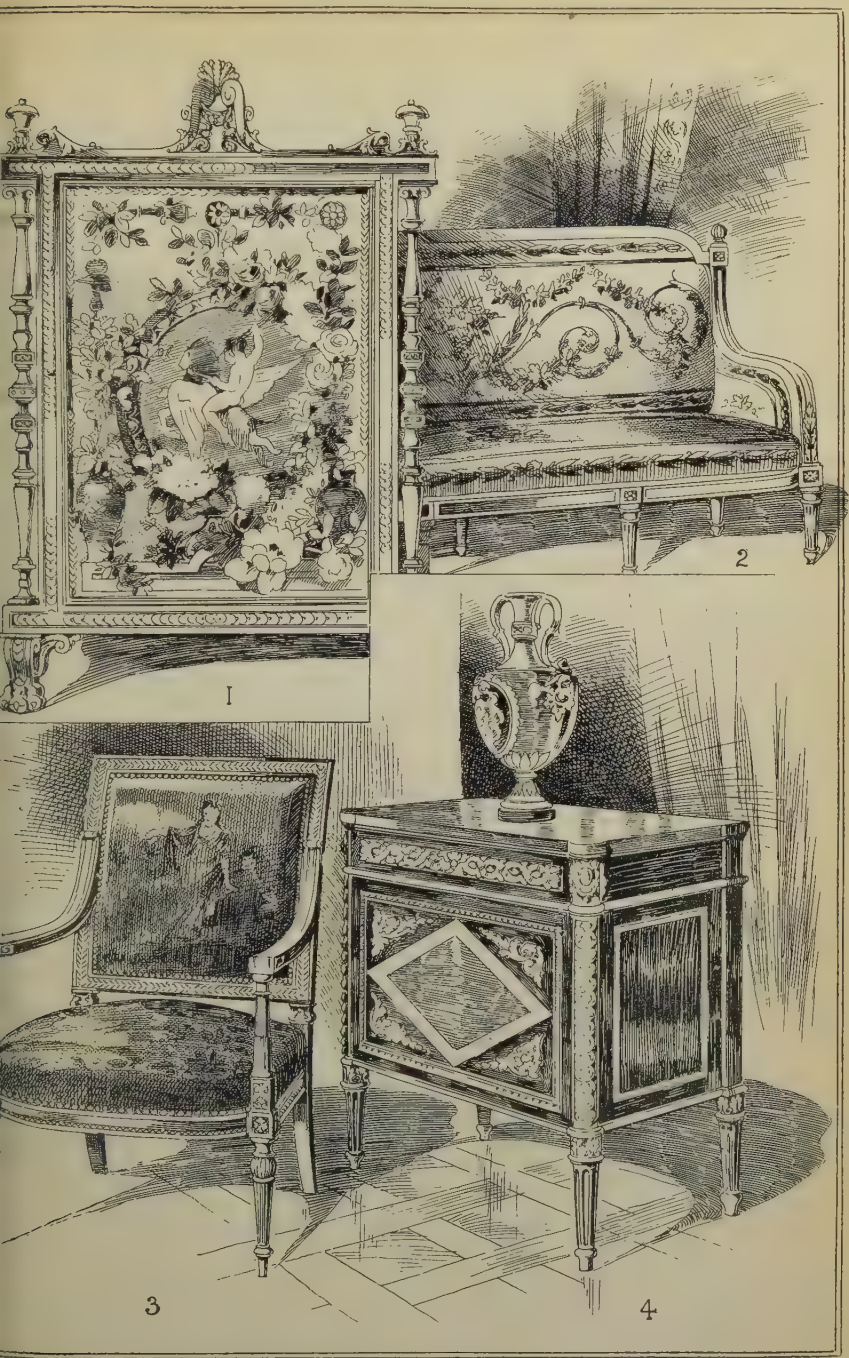
if this be constantly borne in mind, the task of distinguishing one style from the other will be very greatly simplified.

It is for us to discover, then, so far as we can, the special character of which the "Louis-Seize" enrichment partook, and to decide in what category it is to be classed. And with regard to this, I may again refer, for a moment, to the fact that there are two distinct classes of decoration—and I am now alluding to decorative art generally—viz.: that which is designed solely and purely to give pleasure to the eye, to appeal to our love of grace of form, and appreciation of the skilful disposition of detail; and that which, while pleasing the eye by the possession of the qualities indicated, conveys to the mind also some lesson, or suggestion of something further. These two classes we may describe as the purely decorative and the decorative-symbolical. In the "Louis-Quatorze" the ornamentation was intended to overpower as well as please; in the "Louis-Quinze" it was intended to lull the senses into voluptuous abandonment; and in the "Louis-Seize" we come to yet a third type—to a fresh vein of symbolism. Let us see what it symbolises.

Though Louis the Sixteenth differed vastly in character from his predecessor, he resembled him insomuch that he was far from being disposed to exert himself for the good of his country; and in no respect did he share the energy or determination of "Le Grand Monarque." The martial spirit was absent from his rule—that spirit which had predominated for so long until Philip of Orleans gave it the *quietus*, and which had so successfully been ignored by Louis the Fifteenth in his later years. It cannot be said by any means that the new sovereign was a libertine; but he was a lover of ease, addicted to peaceful pursuits, and devoted to the cultivation of the graces and refinements of life. He was neither vain of conquests abroad nor jealous of being regarded as a man of iron will by his subjects at home; and provided that political disturbances did not interfere with his own personal

comfort and enjoyment of life, or limit "supply," he concerned himself but little about them. Times of comparative peace had succeeded those of trouble and turmoil, though they were not destined to continue for very long. King, queen, and courtiers, not looking for, and therefore not discovering, the presence of the thunder-clouds in whose womb was pent up one of the most appalling outbursts of popular fury the world has ever seen, passed their days in dalliance with whatever appealed to their fancies, and devoted their energies almost exclusively to the pursuit of enjoyment, so long as serious exertion of any kind, mental or physical, was not required for the gratification of their desires. The notes of the shepherd's pipe had, in truth, taken the place of the bray of the trumpet; silks, velvets, brocades, ruffles, and satin shoes had ousted the martial cuirass and spurred heel from the scene; ministers' "portfolios" and despatch boxes were filled with love-lorn ditties; swords rusted in their scabbards; even the duello was interdicted; and it might almost be said that the only truly militant member of the community who kept his weapons in constant readiness was Dan Cupid himself, the shafts from whose bow continued to speed as unerringly as ever.

This, and much more in a similar vein, was what there was to be symbolised, and it is this which accounts for the presence, indeed the predominance, in "Louis-Seize" decoration of almost every imaginable symbol and emblem that could suggest to the mind in the most delightful manner the cultivation of the arts of peace, and, to a still greater extent, the pursuit of pleasure rather than the suggestion of strife, conflict, and conquest. The spirit pervading the court was indeed caught and crystallised, if I may so express it, by the disciples of Watteau and Boucher; a spirit of *dolce far niente*, delightful enough to enjoy where circumstances will permit its indulgence, but which, under the social conditions prevailing in France at the time, could not but lead to awful disaster.

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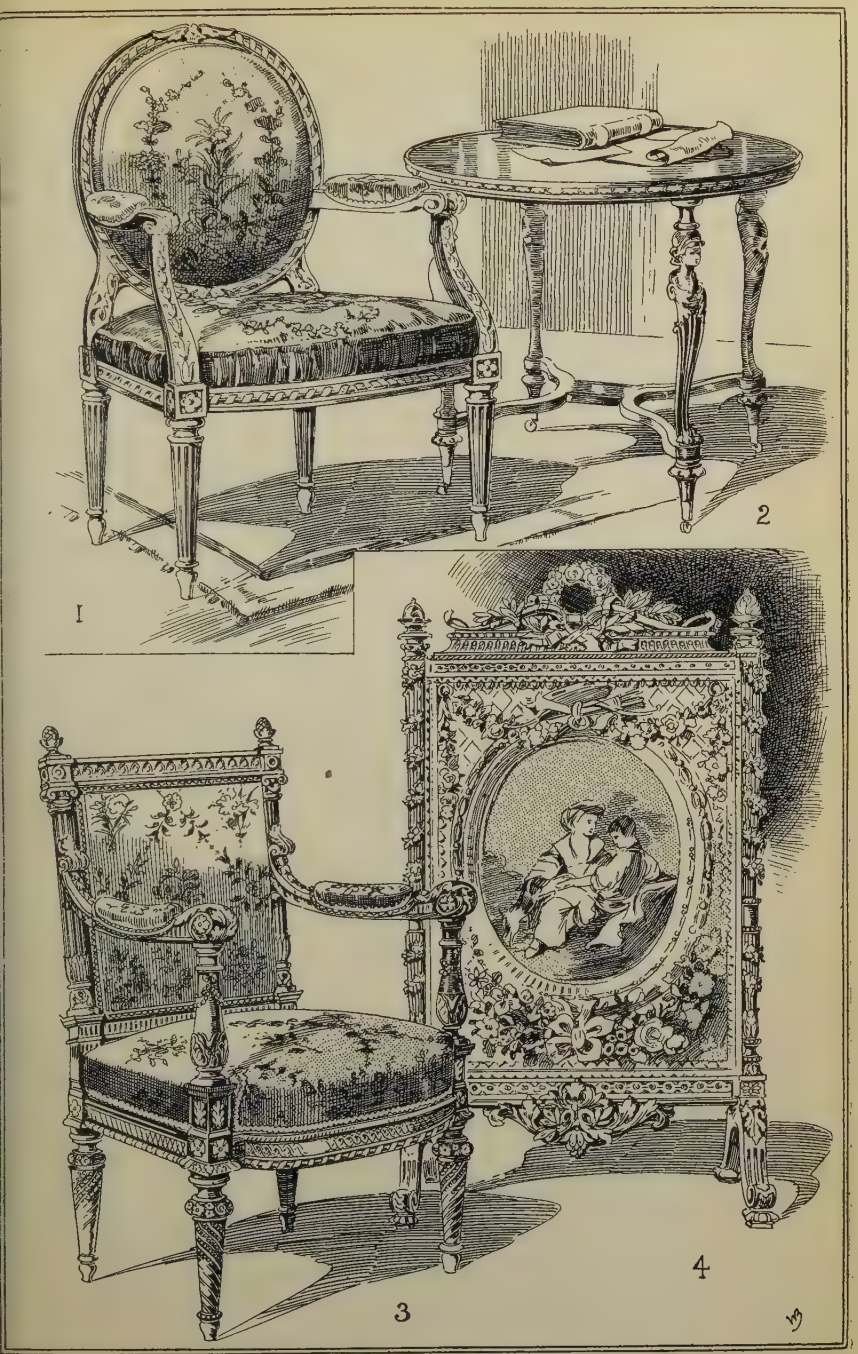
The foregoing remarks will make it clear that the transition from the "Louis-Quinze" to the "Louis-Seize" was not by any means a sudden one. The development was gradual. Determined as were the pioneers of the latter to bring about the existence of a completely new order of things, they were compelled to work in accordance with existing conditions, and saw clearly that an accomplishment of the complete change they had in view was a task whose execution must of necessity be a matter of time. At the death of Louis the Fifteenth, and when his successor came to the throne, most of the royal palaces were completely furnished and decorated, as we should naturally expect to find them, in the style popular during the preceding reign; and, before any appreciable change could be effected, much of that which was already in existence had to be done away with in order to make room for the practical demonstration of the ideas that were germinating. That was not to be accomplished in a single day, or even in a single year. To this time we find in one room, in many of the old palaces and châteaux, decoration and furnishing which show the characteristics of two or more distinct styles, indicating either that the means were not forthcoming to do away with the old altogether and replace it by the new, or that the old was regarded with sufficient veneration and admiration to preserve it from banishment. At the inception of almost every fresh style, the old and the new were, for a time, wedded in precisely the same way, one with the other; though one was "dying hard," as it were, and the other was barely yet possessed of sufficient independent and individual strength to stand alone. Minor details, novel in character, were grafted on to already existent and familiar constructive forms; slight indications of change at first, but growing aggressive by degrees, until the forms themselves were superseded, and others more in keeping with the taste of the times took their place.

In planning this review of the styles included in my scheme,

I was forced to recognise the fact that to deal fully, in the space at my disposal, with every period of *transition* was out of the question; to follow such a course would necessitate the publication of many bulky volumes. Considering, then, what would be the best plan to adopt, I determined to deal, in the main, with each style at its fullest development, and to discuss the individual peculiarities of every one; feeling that then the recognition of transitional examples would involve but small difficulty. When we are familiar with the characteristic types of all the distinct styles, it is a very simple matter to distinguish when the decline of one set in and the birth of another took place, and, consequently, to classify correctly the somewhat hybrid productions that belonged to intervening periods.

I must now turn once again from mere generalisation to the more immediate discussion of the particular types I have selected for illustration, in order to make clear to the reader in what respect the "Louis-Seize" was really the foundation of much which was best in our own "Heppelwhite" and "Sheraton." In the first place, we may set ourselves to note the radical changes which were brought about in the general forms of the furniture that drove the Rococo from its position of pre-eminence, and for a time completely took its place. Here we find a revolution indeed. While "Louis-Quinze" ornamentation, even at the best, was to a very large extent constructive—*i.e.* usurped the place of that which should have been construction pure and simple—that of the true "Louis-Seize" never, in any circumstances, transgressed beyond what were its legitimate limitations. It was designed entirely for, and regarded solely as, an enrichment for a foundation, or basis, already provided by the cabinet maker or chair maker for the carver, inlayer, or painter to beautify. This is a most important point for the student to bear in mind. In this style we have no longer to deal with a multitude of curves in the shaping, or an abundance of coquillage, apparently of the

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most fragile and unreliable description, and ostensibly serving to support weighty superstructures—a task for which, both in reality and appearance, they were utterly unfitted. In their place we have sensible, straightforward, honest construction, conveying every suggestion of stability, though, at the same time, light and graceful in proportion; satisfying to the eye, and altogether free from the suspicion of impending and imminent collapse, which is so often associated with the creations of the preceding mode. It may be true that, so far as form was concerned, novelty was consequently, in this way, constantly sacrificed to good taste; but novelty is not to be looked upon as "the be-all and end-all of our strange existence upon earth," and when it is attained at the expense of stability on the one hand, and good taste on the other, as so frequently is the case even to-day, the less we have of it the better. It is impossible to emphasise this point too strongly if the most distinctive features of the two styles are to be properly appreciated; and the student must thoroughly grasp the fact that while, in the one place, the "Louis-Quinze" designer was perpetually striving to make his decoration constructional, the great aim in the "Louis-Seize" was to decorate construction.

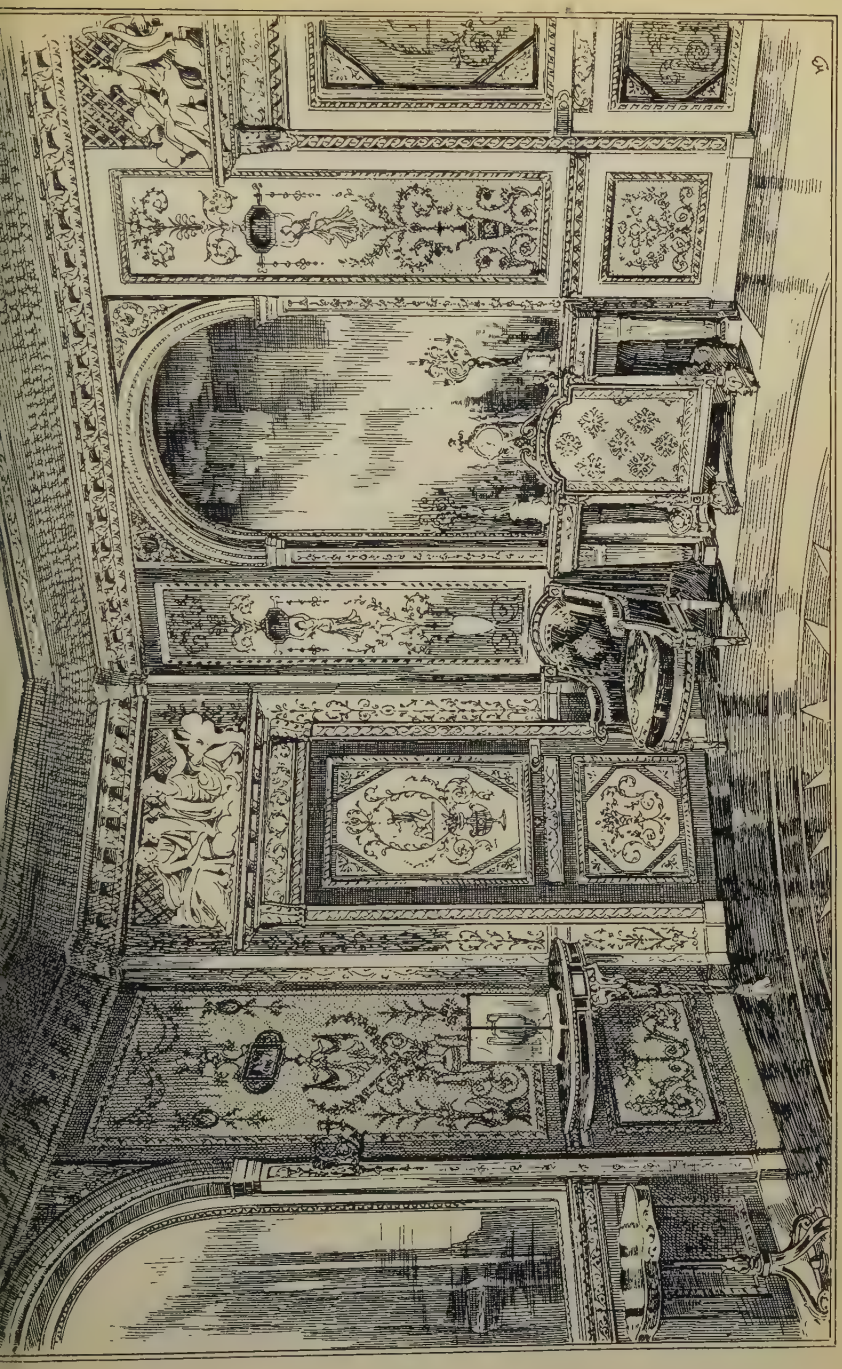
In "Louis-Seize" forms themselves, then, we need not look for anything very striking or exceptional; if we do, our search will remain unrewarded by success. They are, in fact, precisely what they should be—speaking from the strictest point of view—admirably serving the purposes for which they were designed, and presenting no very great difficulties in execution to the craftsman possessed of average skill. Where the presence of supports, such as legs, trusses, brackets, and similar members, is called for, those provided are obviously of a character most exactly adapted for the requirements to be fulfilled, instead of being confused masses of contorted scrolls, leaves, shells, and other more or less extravagant detail, pressed into service to perform duties for which, by reason of their very

nature, they appear to be quite unsuited, and have actually in many instances to be supported themselves in order to bear the weight imposed upon them. Need I say that the new rule was a vast step in the right direction? It was not beneficial only so far as regarded French furniture, for the British cabinet maker—at least those who take a pride in sustaining the best traditions of their craft—may be truly thankful that the change referred to came about in time to exercise a counteracting influence on the Rococo fever which had invaded this country, owing to the exertions put forth all too successfully by Thomas Chippendale to spread the infection which he had contracted, and from which he himself was suffering badly.

Had this reaction, to which I have intentionally referred at some length, not come about in France when it did, it is quite within the bounds of possibility that what we may term the "Chippendale-Rococo" would have enjoyed a far longer run of popularity in this country, which would unquestionably have been a great misfortune. Had Heppelwhite and Sheraton not had before them the example set by the "Louis-Seize" they might have continued on the old lines laid down by their predecessor, and the dainty creations which they eventually produced, based on this new French style, would never have seen the light. Thus it is that we are really as intimately concerned with the changes which took place in the applied arts of France at this time as were the people of that country themselves.

A glance at all the chairs and seats illustrated on the accompanying plates will at once make strikingly clear the extent of the change which came about in the designing of the forms of those articles alone, apart from any others.

As a beginning of our comparative analysis, let us look at the legs first—a most indispensable feature. The pure "Louis-Quinze" chair-leg was never, under any conditions, straight; it was always curviliuear, generally in that shaping



BEDROOM OF MARIE ANTOINETTE, CHATEAU DE COMPIEGNE

(See page 263)

which we have come to know as the "cabriole." The pure "Louis-Seize" leg, on the contrary, was never curved, but always straight, and almost invariably enriched in one way or another. This point is amply demonstrated by all the models shown; and, in order to appreciate fully how Heppelwhite and Sheraton followed the example of their French competitors, the reader may compare the types of the three styles specified below :—

CHAIR-LEGS.

| "*Louis-Seize.*" | "*Heppelwhite.*" | "*Sheraton.*" |
|---|---|---|
| Fig. 1, Plate I. | Fig. 5, Plate I. | Fig. 2, Plate I. |
| „ 1, „ III. | „ 25, „ II. | „ 4, „ VII. |
| | „ 5, „ VIII. | |
| *Bed Pillar.* | | |
| Fig. 4, Plate III. | „ 27, „ II. | |
| „ 1, „ III. | | „ 15 „ III. |

These are the most striking examples, but there are many others which on comparison will reveal the existence of a very close resemblance. As a matter of fact, there is not a single "Sheraton" turned leg which is not based in a certain degree — generally a very great degree—upon the "Louis-Seize."

Considering the general outline of chair-backs next, the following may be studied side by side :—

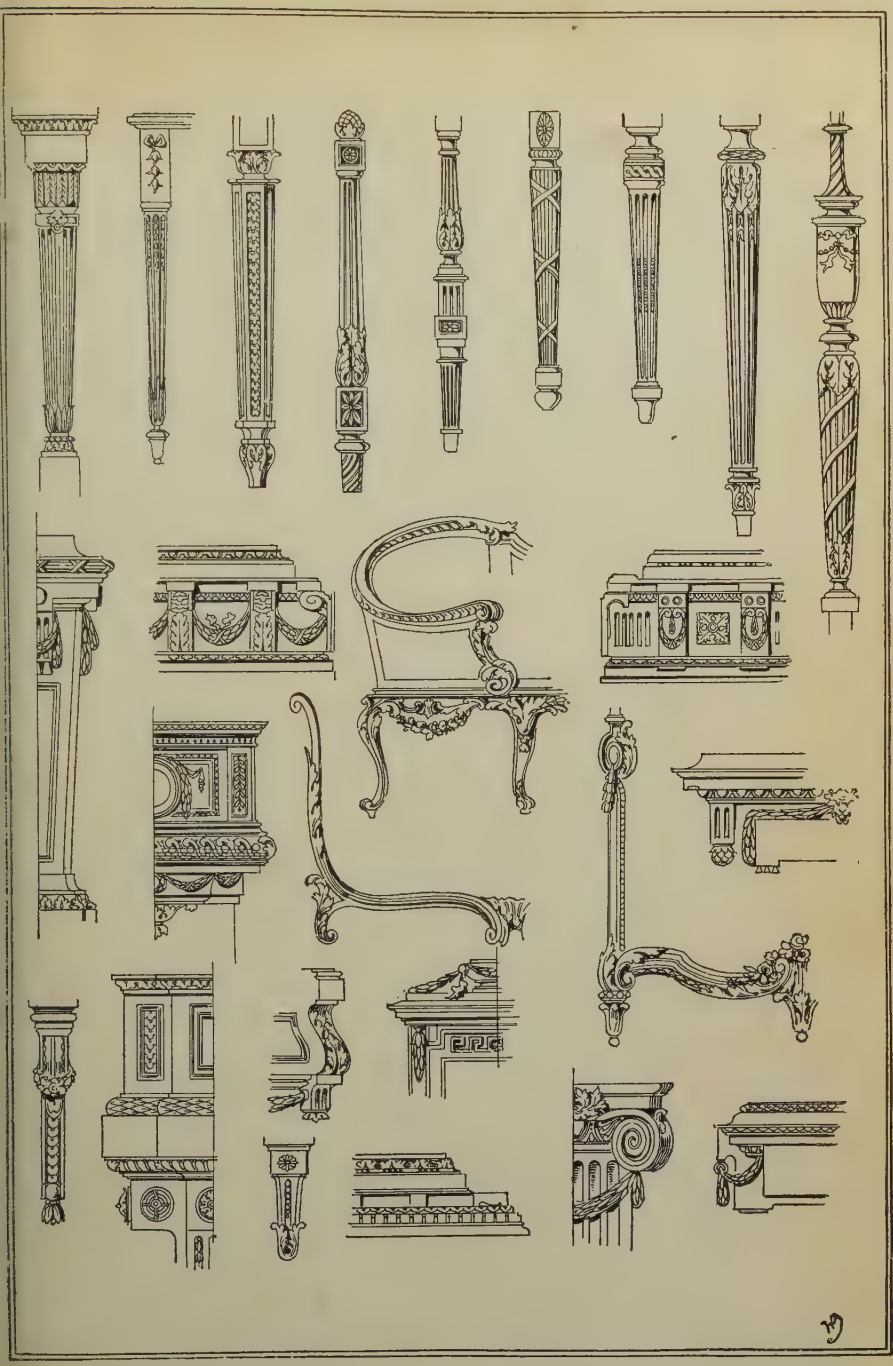
| "*Louis-Seize.*" | "*Heppelwhite.*" | "*Sheraton.*" |
|---|---|---|
| Fig. 1, Plate I. | | Fig. 2, Plate I. |
| „ 2, „ II. | Fig. 12, Plate II. | |
| „ 3, „ II. | | „ 5, „ I. |
| | CHAIR-ARMS. | |
| „ 1, „ I. | | „ 5, „ I. |
| „ 4, „ I. | | „ 1, „ I. |

Here again I have only drawn attention to the most indisputable instances of direct inspiration, but I am sure they will induce my readers to search on their own account for others. There are, I need hardly point out, many modifications and variations in detail, but the "family likeness" is

strong throughout. As regards the ornamental detail, there is not the least necessity for me to specify and particularise points of resemblance which are so apparent everywhere. It may be noted in passing that Sheraton's "conversation chair" (Fig. 1, Plate II., "Sheraton"), though different in form from the French type shown in Fig. 4, Plate II., was undoubtedly based on an idea borrowed from the "Louis-Seize."

With regard to the peaceful symbolism of the "Louis-Seize" enrichment, I may briefly draw the reader's attention to the *caduceus* on the table legs, Fig. 2, Plate I.; Cupid's blossom-bedecked bow and sheaves of arrows in the mantelpiece on Plate II.; the arrows, garlands, ribands, and bunches of blossom surrounding the monogram of Marie-Antoinette in the chair-back, Fig. 3, Plate II.; Cupid's bow and the torch of Hymen, with "love-birds" above in the buffet, Plate II.; the shield, on the bed-end, wreathed with laurel, Fig. 4, Plate III., and many other details which will tell their own story of placid enjoyment, amorous dalliance, and the pursuit of pleasure generally.

The marquetry of the diaper class previously mentioned is represented in the table, Fig. 2, Plate III.; while the work of the *fondeur-ciseleur* plays an important part in the *ormolu* mounts of Fig. 2, Plate I.; of the buffet, Plate II.; Fig. 4, Plate III., Fig. 4, Plate IV., and Fig. 2, Plate V., in which last we have a slight departure from the perfectly straight turned leg, and a most delightful one withal. Delicate enriched brass mouldings and "galleries" were much in favour with the "Louis-Seize" cabinet maker, as indicated in a number of the types illustrated. In dealing with tables, smaller cabinets, buffets, etc., I must not omit to mention that alabaster, onyx, and the rarest marbles were very frequently employed for the tops—another feature of which Sheraton was not slow to make a note. Still further comparison may be instituted between the under-framing of the



"LOUIS-SEIZE" DETAIL. ALSO THREE EXAMPLES OF THE TRANSITIONAL TYPE, IN WHICH THE CURVILINEAR ELEMENT IS STILL RETAINED

"Louis-Seize" table, Fig. 2, Plate I., and the "Sheraton" under-framing, Fig. 9, Plate VI., and the "Louis-Seize" "claw" supports of the screen, Plate V., and those of the small table, Plate VI., with many in "Sheraton."

Enough has been said then, I think, to indicate how the "Louis-Seize" came into existence; to convey a knowledge of some of the most powerful influences that were instrumental in causing it to differ so vastly from the preceding mode; and to illustrate in some degree the extent of our indebtedness to it for much of that spirit which went to make our own late eighteenth-century furniture as refined and tasteful as it was.

In dismissing this most interesting section of our study for the time being we cannot do better than try to fix in our minds the picture of as perfect a complete scheme of actual "Louis-Seize" furnishing and decoration as it is possible for us to conjure up; and a better could not be found than the bedroom of Marie-Antoinette at the Château de Compiègne, which is illustrated on Plate VI. In this delightful chamber of sleep every turn of the carver's chisel, every mark of the *ciseleur's* graver, every thread from the loom, every touch of the brush, speaks of culture and refinement; yet does not the whole bring back to our memory the words of the dauphiness: "Alas! sire, for such kings as we shall be?"

# "EMPIRE"

THE political history of France during the closing years of the eighteenth century; the events which led up to the execution of Louis the Sixteenth and his queen; the state of chaos that followed the downfall of the monarchy, and the work of Napoleon to reduce that chaos to order, must all be so fresh in the memory of the reader that it is not at all necessary to re-tell the story here. All that we need do is to bear it well in mind, keep the facts before us, and see, so far as we can, to what extent the applied arts of France were influenced by them, and, above all, by the dominating spirit of that Little Corporal who discovered something far more precious in his knapsack than the traditional *baton du maréchal.*

That the art of France *was* revolutionised for a time, together with everything else associated with the country, through the dictatorship of that colossal mind, no one can possibly deny; and it is more than a little interesting to see by what instrumentality the radical changes which took place were really brought about, and to study that which has been handed down to posterity as the outward and visible sign of it all. We have no foundation for the assumption that Napoleon himself was an artist in any sense of the word, but it is clear that he appreciated the fact that, for his sway to be completely effectual, he must surround himself by material pomp and grandeur, that the eyes of his subjects should be dazzled by his splendour, and their minds overpowered by his magnificence. It is not too much to assert, indeed, that the theatrical element was strongly apparent, and intentionally so, throughout almost everything he did; and

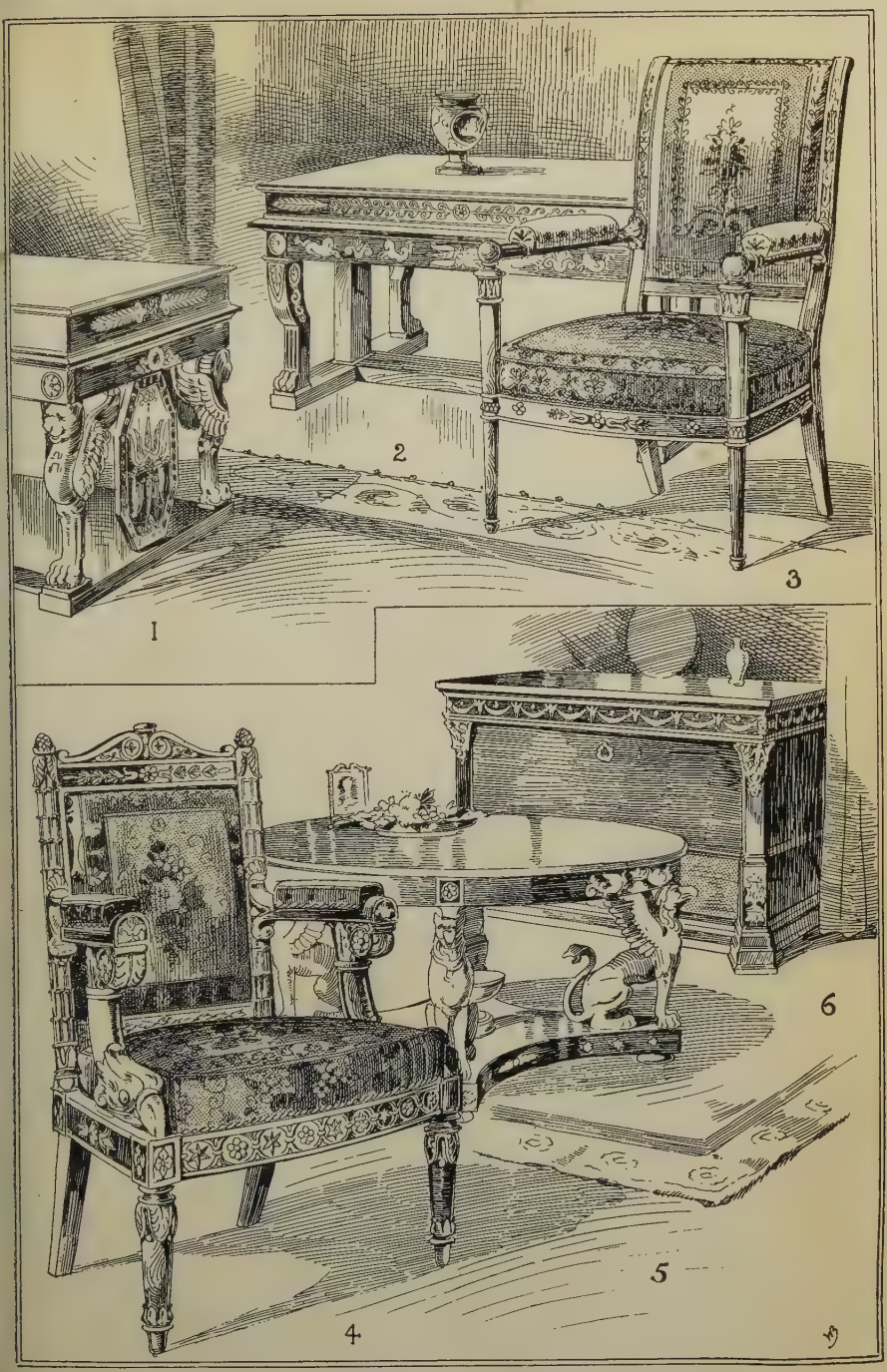
that being the case, the preparation of the *mise en scène* was regarded as a question of paramount importance.

When, in 1799, on the memorable 18th Brumaire, Napoleon overthrew the Directory and caused himself to be nominated First Consul, there were State residences enough for himself and Josephine. But the mark of the Revolution had been indelibly impressed upon them all, and a vast scheme of restoration had to be carried out before they could be expected to meet with the approbation of their new occupants. The question was, then, in what manner were they to be restored? Was the old order of things to be revived? Let us recall, for a moment, the story told by the then existent remnants of the glories which had so recently passed away. Shattered as many of them were through the mis-directed zeal of the *sans-culottes*, these old palaces, with their tottering walls, powder-begrimed gilding, and splintered furniture, were haunted by souvenirs of the "doll monarchs," whose heads had fallen at the command of the populace; of the "Well-Beloved," whose corpse was followed to its last resting-place with curses; of "Le Grand Monarque," whose great work of reconstruction had been so nullified by the puerility of his successors. We see there, in imagination, the shade of Richelieu, cursing the weakness of the fallen sovereigns; of Mazarin bemoaning the loss of his hoarded treasure; Anne of Austria weeping over the fate of her children; Philip of Orleans hunting for his rouge pots; Madame de Maintenon and poor La Vallière, Jeanne-Antoinette du Pompadour, and the ill-fated Du Barry, wringing their hands; while the sweet strains of Lully seem to mingle with the echoes.

Such were the memories which were kept green by all that remained of the decoration and furnishing of the residences and palaces to enter which Napoleon had won the right in council—or at the point of the sword: memories most hateful to him, and, through his influence, to the country at large. These memories, therefore, had to go, together with

everything that might be calculated to revive them. But what was to take their place, and from whom was the inspiration for a fitting substitute to come? That was the question which presented itself to the First Consul, and he did with it as he did with every other question that submitted itself to him—settled it. Palaces were waiting restoration, and paintings wanted replacing, which, of course, meant that architects and painters must be found to superintend the task. They must, moreover, be architects and painters whose past records justified the assumption that they might be relied upon to breathe into their work the Imperial Spirit which dominated the mind of the great Empire Builder.

Was the "Louis-Quinze" or the "Louis-Seize," with suggestions of pastoral pleasures and amorous delights, of any use here! No. Napoleon's views on the question of morality, it must be admitted, were far from narrow; but what he himself indulged in and what he desired others to do were vastly different matters. In his imperial surroundings at all events he would tolerate but little toying with love knots—except the historic one which was destined to be untied—nor would he countenance Cupid's bows; flowers were to be the wreath of the victor, and not to be garlanded about the lute, lyre, and pan-pipes; while as to the timorous Colin and the coy shepherdess, they could not look for a very cordial reception at court. There were some exceptions to this rule, but the rule obtained nevertheless. "Empire" must be writ large in everything, and the task was to find the men who could write it in bold enough characters. They were found of course; and the names of the chief among them were Charles Percier, Pierre-François-Leonard Fontaine, and Jacques-Louis David. The records of these men completely justified the choice under the special and unique conditions recorded. All three were deeply versed in the history of the old Roman Empire, the completion of a "second edition" of whose glories was ever present in the mind of Napoleon; all had

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become saturated with the traditions of Classic art in the lands of its birth; while one of them, at least, outvied, if possible, the Consul himself in his detestation of the Bourbons, and no doubt gloated with devilish delight over the day that saw the execution of the Duc d'Enghien.

It is desirable to dwell for a brief space on the careers of these notabilities; for by so doing we shall be able later to account all the more readily for the character of the style which they created, and the study of which is the object we have at present in view.

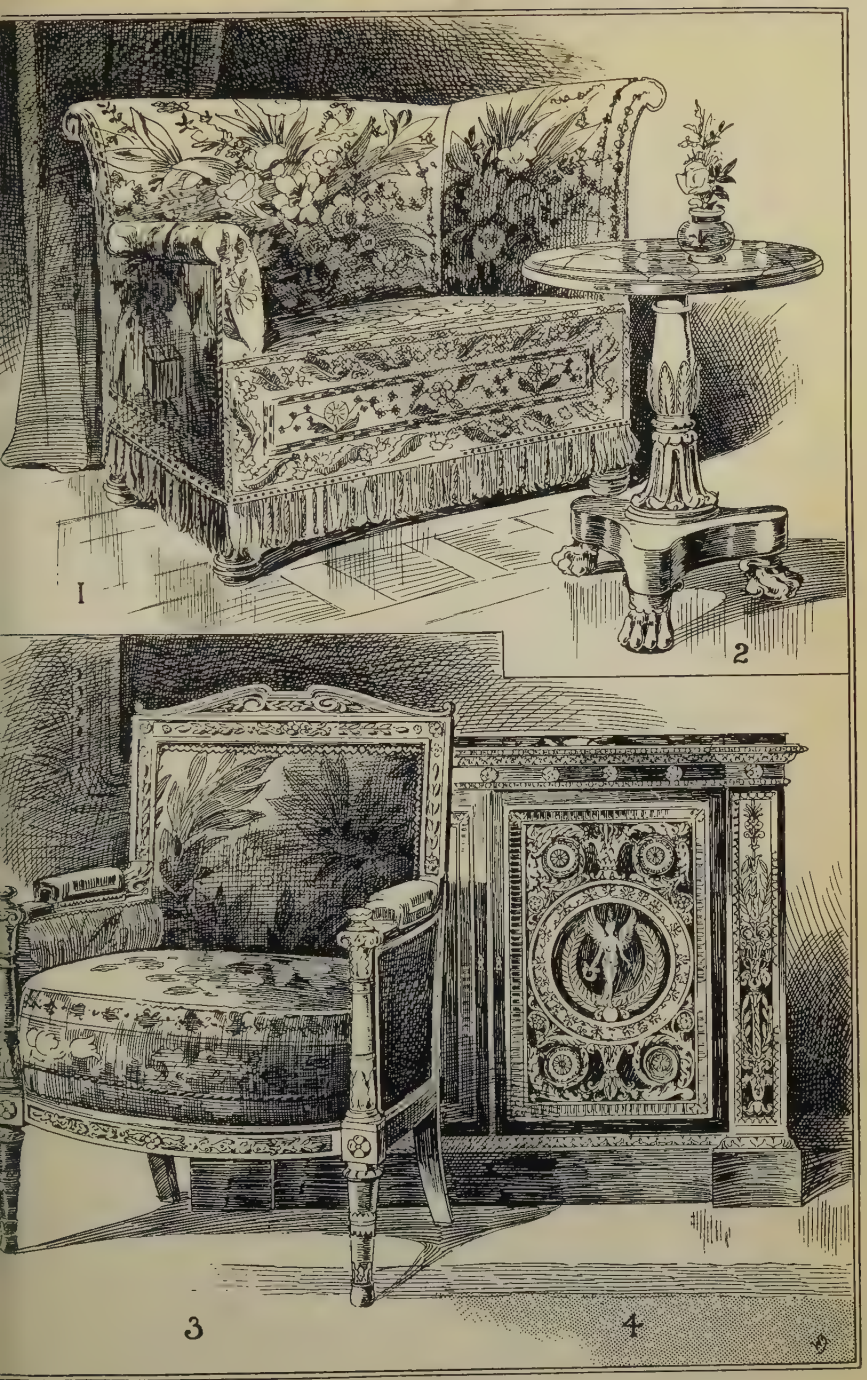
Charles Percier, even during the reign of Louis the Sixteenth, had attained a fame so great as an architect, and particularly as an exponent of the principles of ancient Roman art, that when, in 1792, just a year prior to that during which the guillotine became the temporary ruler of France, he founded a school of architecture in Paris, students from all parts of the civilised world flocked to him for instruction, and received a training which, in after years, raised them in their turn to positions of eminence in their own lands. Perhaps the best known works of Percier himself are the completion of the Louvre, the Madeleine, and the Bourse, in Paris. This artist, it is interesting to note by the way, was on terms of the most intimate friendship with Canova and our own Flaxman.

Pierre-François-Leonard Fontaine (who worked largely in collaboration with Percier, and who became known as the "Father of the Modern French School"), in the year 1785, when quite a young man, in fact when only twenty-three years of age, won the French National Prize for architecture; went to study in Rome at the expense of the Academy; was accorded an extra prize of 3000 francs by the State for his drawings of "The Imperial City in the Time of the Cæsars"; and, after his return to his own country, took first rank at the head of his profession, and terminated his career as Architect to King Louis the Eighteenth.

As for Jacques-Louis David, his life was indeed an eventful

one. Born in 1748, while Louis the Fifteenth was yet on the throne, he early gave evidence of the possession of artistic talents; and, when he had attained the requisite age, became a pupil of Joseph-Marie Vien, Director of the French Academy at Rome, and afterwards Commander of the Legion of Honour when that order had been instituted by Napoleon. Having completed his studies in Italy, he returned to France, and, like Percier, opened a school, the fame of which attracted many students to its doors. He revisited Italy in 1784, and on his second return was hailed as "The Regenerator of French Art." His admission to the Academy followed, and apartments were accorded to him in the Louvre, together with the title "Painter to the King" (Louis the Sixteenth). When the people of France commenced to gorge themselves with blood, David displayed an insatiable appetite for it; forsook his "*appartements*" at the Louvre; forgot the favours that had been heaped upon him by royalty; became a member of the National Convention, joined hands with Robespierre, for whom he formed a great personal attachment; and, when the death of the king had been decided upon, was the loudest to clamour for the head of his sovereign, and the foremost to hurl the vilest insults at him upon whom he had previously fawned for favour. When he was deprived of the protection of Robespierre, and was himself brought face to face with "Mademoiselle de Paris," his head was left on his shoulders on account of his genius as an artist; so he hastily abandoned party politics and returned to art, in which he became "Dictator."

Such were the men to whom Napoleon looked for the creation of the art of the First Empire; men who laid the foundation of the "Empire" style, and, further, did much towards the completion of the edifice. Percier and Fontaine were set to work early to restore Malmaison and other palaces, as well as to complete the Louvre and the Tuileries; while, in the direction of the fine arts, the influence of David

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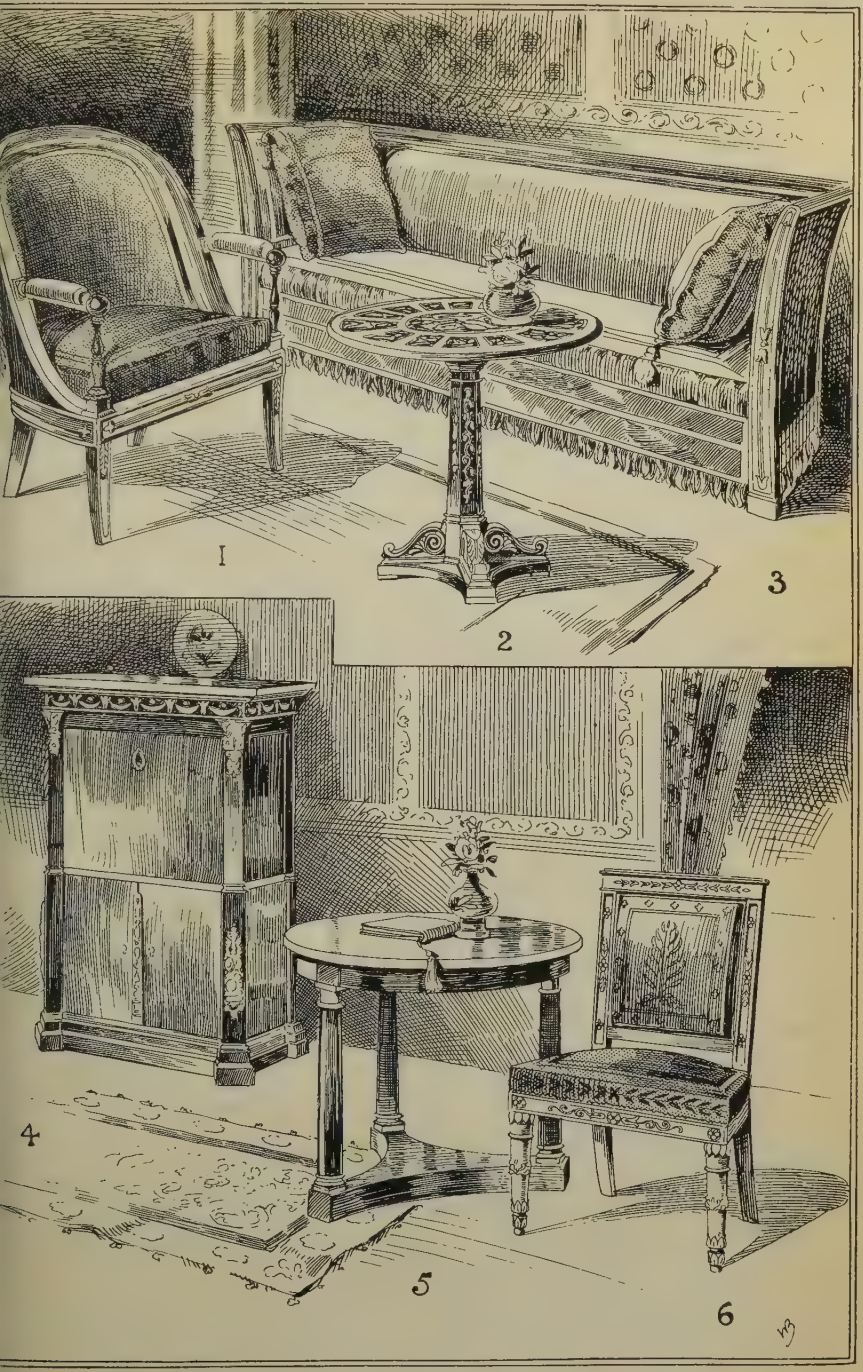
became supreme, and so far reaching in other paths that even the designing of the official dresses of the court was entrusted to him. Napoleon heaped favours upon his head, created him "Commander of the Legion of Honour," so that he took rank with his erstwhile master; and so inflated did he become with the greatness of his own importance that his conceit was almost intolerable, and fortunate were they deemed who could persuade him to execute commissions for them. A story is told to the effect that the Duke of Wellington visited David's studio on one occasion, and expressed a desire to be painted, but that the artist met the request by turning on his heel with the retort that he did not paint Englishmen! Whether this be true I am not in a position to affirm.

The studies of these men had naturally made them masters of the best traditions of ancient Egyptian, Greek, and Roman art, and those traditions furnished exactly the inspiration which they required for the execution of the work they had in hand. Their imperial patron, moreover, had travelled much in the lands of the Cæsars and the Pharaohs; had seen and admired many of the incomparable works of their times; and had found in them a material expression of the stupendous greatness of his own imaginings and plans. So there was an open field, a clearly defined programme, and unlimited opportunity for the achievement of great things; and certainly the chapter which was written at this time in the history of the art of the world moves with stately measure.

In considering individual examples of "Empire" furniture, we may note, in the first place, whether, notwithstanding the determination to banish all memories of the "Louis-Seize" and of the preceding styles, any traces of them lingered in the homes of Napoleon. It would indeed have been remarkable had absolutely none remained; some actually did, but they are very slight and few and far between. I will, however, point out one or two. If the general forms of Figs.

3 and 4, Plate I., Fig. 3, Plate II., and Fig. 6, Plate IV., be carefully studied, it will be apparent that, in planning them, the designer had not completely lost sight of the "Louis-Seize" chair, and was not able, try as he might, to keep clear of its lines, but there the resemblance ends. The proportions are different—much heavier generally; the detail is in no way related to that of the preceding style, so the whole structures are endowed with a character entirely different from that which charmed the refined tastes of Marie Antoinette. For an "Empire" chair, that illustrated in Fig. 3, Plate I., is exceptionally light and graceful, and the shaping of the back is somewhat suggestive of the "Greek" curve so popular amongst French designers of the period; but the massive arm-chair on the same plate (Fig. 4) is dignified enough to support the shade, or the body were it available, of Junius Brutus himself, passing sentence of death on his son Titus—an incident so beloved of Jacques Louis David. Here we have a strong reflection of the ancient Roman splendour, with its overpowering heaviness and confusing wealth of redundant detail. A careful observation of the arms will reveal the presence of the Imperial Eagle—in an embryonic state it is true. The front legs of the chair, I need not say, are "Louis-Seize" clothed in "Empire."

Figure 3, Plate II., as I have already suggested, illustrates another "Louis Seize" frame upon which the "Empire" mantle has fallen; in place of the dainty enrichment of the earlier style, we find the heavier "Roman" acanthus leaf, the "Classic" capital to the front legs, the bay, and the severe "Greek" scrolls surmounting the back. Fig. 6, Plate III., gives a very simple study in "Empire," and is most restrained so far as ornamentation goes, clearly revealing the "Greek" influence. Fig. 6, Plate IV., brings us nearer to the "Louis-Seize," though the turning of the front legs, instead of being diversified by members, presents one unbroken line, and the legs themselves, by their form and

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treatment, almost convey the idea of flaming torches, irresistibly recalling Nero and the traditional setting for the most famous of his musical performances.

I have reserved three seats for special consideration. The first of these is portrayed in Fig. 1, Plate IV. Comparatively insignificant as this example of the chair maker's art is in point of size, I employ no figure of speech in saying that it is instinct with stately dignity in every item of form and detail. It well need be, indeed, for such was the sacred throne of the great emperor himself. When in the throne room, this chair was, of course, mounted on a daïs, and shadowed by rich and heavy draperies, relieved by martial emblems; but, even when divorced from those stage accessories, it is every inch a seat for a king. The frame, with its chimerical "trusses" or supports, wreath of bay leaves entwined with ribands, and rosettes, or *pateræ*, is richly gilt, while the spheres terminating the arms, which were grasped by the hands of the emperor when seated in state, are of the purest crystal, studded with stars. Did not the imperial hand, holding the star-studded sphere, symbolise the insatiable aspirations of the man? Had he conquered this earth itself, would he have been satisfied, or might he not, in very truth, have chafed at the defiance of the terrestrial bodies, the symbols of which were beneath his fingers? Who will venture to say?

But to complete my description of this treasure. The covering is of deep green velvet, if I remember aright—it is many years since I saw it—richly embroidered with gold, the whole of the design of the embroidery being planned so as to frame in the royal initial "N." In front of the seat cushion the Imperial Eagle is "supported" by "Roman" foliated scrolls.

I have remarked upon the comparatively insignificant proportions of this throne; but is it not quite possible that this very insignificance, so far as size is concerned, may be most significant in other respects. It is not at all unreasonable

to presume that, being notably small of stature, Napoleon dictated that his throne should be planned in proportion to his own frame; not being himself prepared to submit to even apparent subordination to wood and upholstery, even though that wood might be gilded with refined gold and the upholstery covered in the costliest products of the loom. Small as he was, he preferred to tower above his surroundings rather than to be lost amidst them.

Some writers would have us believe that Napoleon was never known to "take things easily"; but I am in a position to present conclusive proof to the contrary. Endowed with almost superhuman energy, displaying a terrible capacity for work, turning night into day, and all but killing those who served under him by his constant demands upon their physical endurance, there came periods when even he could support the strain no longer, and had to seek bodily repose, though whether his mind ever enjoyed immunity from activity is open to question. But his attitude even when temporarily resting was characteristic of the really restless disposition of the man; when settled down in either chair or sofa, or any other form of seat furnished with arms, over one or the other of those arms one of the imperial legs would be thrown sooner or later, if it was in any way possible to get it there. So strong was this idiosyncrasy with him that a special seat was made —it is said from his own design—to enable him to indulge it to the full, and with the maximum degree of comfort. Whether the story respecting the authorship of the design be founded upon fact or not must be left open to question; but that the seat itself really was used by Napoleon seems to be beyond dispute, and it now occupies a place of honour in the Palace of Fontainebleau, where I made the sketch for the drawing which appears in Fig. 1, Plate II. It is exceptionally sensible and comfortable, providing a model from which the modern upholsterer would do well to take a hint more often when furnishing the club, smoke-room, or "den."

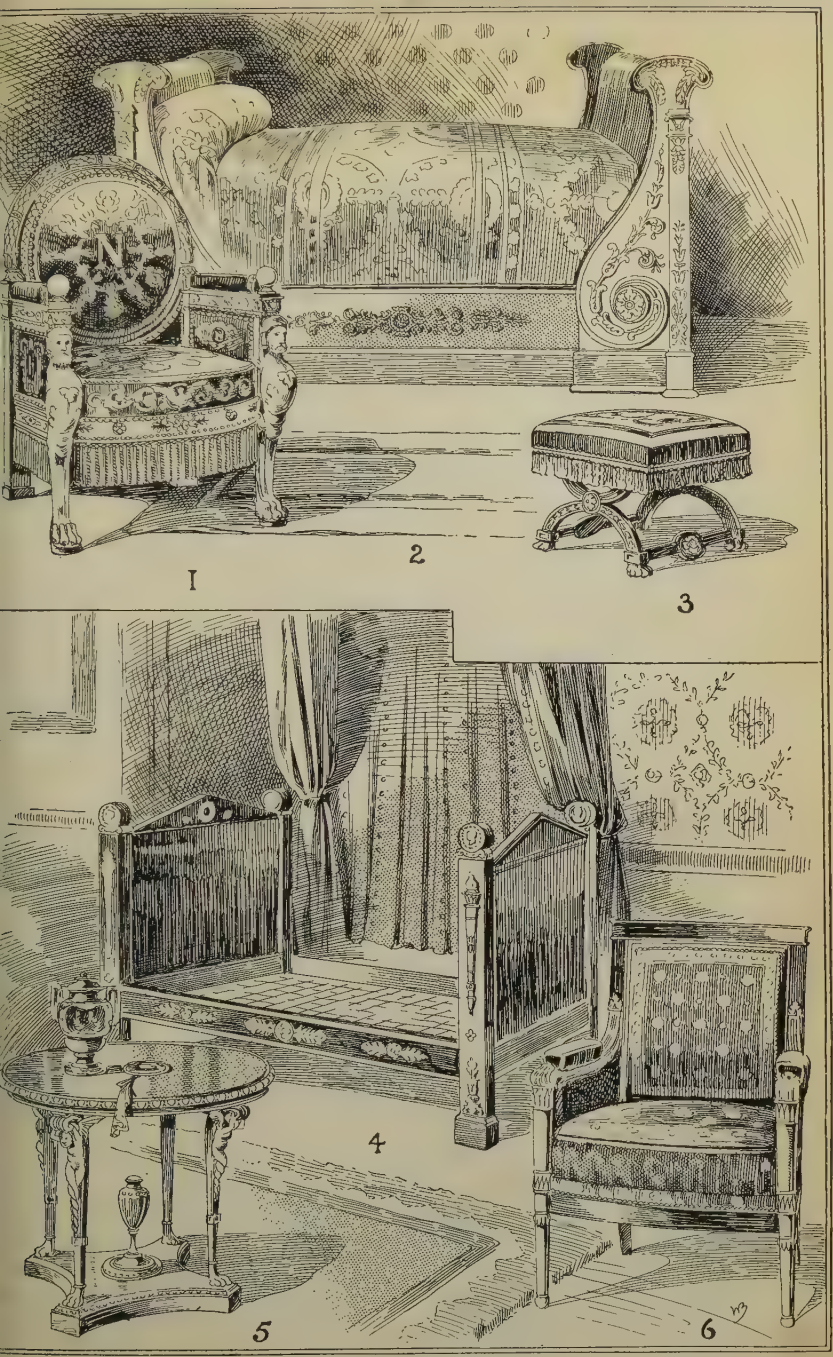


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Figure 1, Plate III., illustrates another "Empire" type of chair. The origin of its form, though that form is vastly different from the others shown here, is clearly "Classic," for it may be traced without difficulty to the old Roman chariots of the simpler description. Substitute two wheels for the legs and take away the arms, and there is the chariot ready for the horses and the arena.

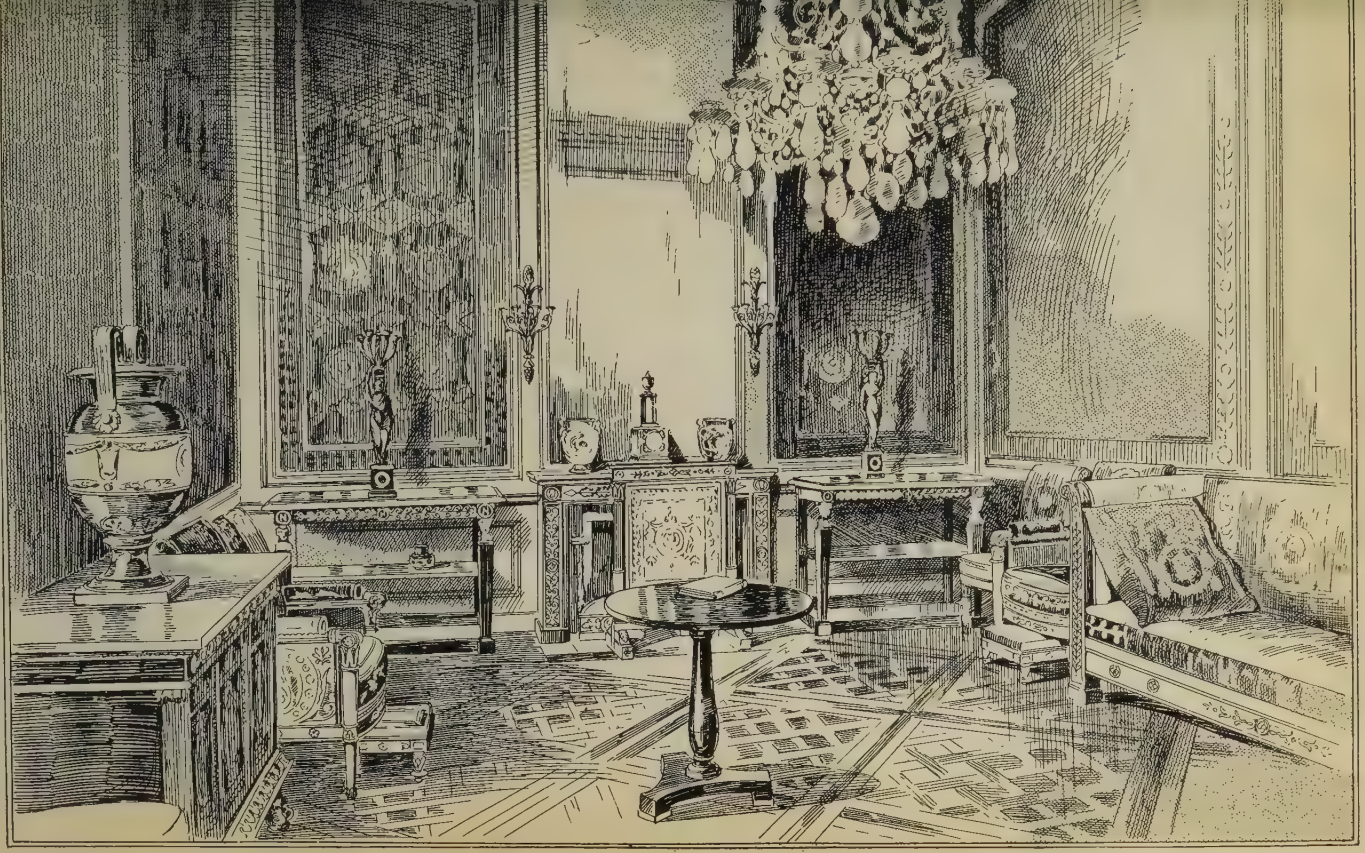
In Fig. 3, Plate IV., we have a "Roman" form again, based on the ancient *curule* chairs, upon which the emperors used to take their ease when not reclining, and in which they were sometimes carried abroad. This particular seat is from the Throne Room at Fontainebleau, and its dimensions seem to suggest that, on State occasions at least, all present who were privileged to sit, had to be content with occupying a lower place in every sense of the word than that of the central and predominant figure.

While dealing with models which we know from existing evidence to have actually formed part of the personal surroundings of Napoleon at home, the two beds, Figs. 2 and 4, Plate IV., must come in for a share of consideration. That shown in Fig. 4 is indeed simple to severity, and is more suggestive of the rigours of camp life than of anything else; but the one above it speaks more of the royal splendour of the palace, though it also is severe, but with the severity of the palmiest days of the "Greek." It is beautiful in the chaste simplicity of its scrolls and perfect restraint in the employment of the most refined decorative detail.

We will next take a glance at the "Empire" table; and in doing so we shall find that the top is almost invariably either circular or rectangular in form, is made either of wood or of some rare marble, and is supported by chimerical creatures inspired by the ancient sphinxes; by "trusses," or legs, shaped to resemble the legs and paws of animals—generally of the lion—or by heavy, and severely simple, turning. Of the first class we have examples in Figs. 1 and 5, Plate I.; of the second

in Fig. 2 on the same plate; and of the third in Fig. 2, Plate II., Figs. 2 and 5, Plate III., and in the historic table upon which Napoleon signed his abdication, shown on Plate V. With regard to these I may point out at the moment that, in Fig. 1, Plate I., in addition to the protective *chimeræ*, the "Roman" shield and bay leaf are introduced in order to heighten the martial feeling of the whole; and that, in the *chimeræ* of Fig. 6, we have the head and wings of the Imperial Eagle. The detail of the rest speaks for itself.

In studying the "Empire" with a view to tracing the influence which it exerted over early nineteenth-century English furnishings, special note should be made of the tables illustrated in Fig. 2, Plate II., Figs. 2 and 5, Plate III., and the "*Table de l'Abdication*," Plate V., for they are models that were seized upon, and "done to death," by the early Victorian cabinet makers of this country. There can, surely, be but few of my readers who have not met, at one time or another, with many descendants of these. The turned pillar, and particularly the base, of the last are familiar friends which in our childhood's days suffered the impress of our boots. The top of the "Empire" pier-table was, more frequently than not, supported by slightly tapered, but by no means slender, legs, surmounted by a classically conceived female head and bust—as in Plate V.—or by the heads of animals or birds. In the tables illustrated it will be noticed that the imperial initial again plays an important part. The dainty little piece which appears in Fig. 5, Plate IV., seems almost to have crept in by mistake, as there is nothing of the stately spirit of the "Empire" about it. It is Napoleonic, however, as regards period; was included in the furnishing of one of the royal residences; and was probably designed and made to please the more delicate tastes of poor Josephine, or of her successor Maria Louisa, to both of whom their imperious master's persistent



ROOM IN THE PALACE AT FONTAINEBLEAU

craving after pomp and display must surely have proved not a little trying.

Leaving chairs, sofas, beds, and tables, it is time to note one or two examples of "Empire" cabinet work proper before concluding our consideration of this style; these will be found in Fig. 6, Plate I., Fig. 4, Plate II., Fig. 4, Plate III., and on Plate V. A knowledge of this phase of the subject is easily acquired, for "Empire" carcase work generally, no matter for what purpose it was intended, was, with the rarest exceptions, extremely severe in form, and depended almost entirely for its character on the detail with which it was enriched. Here the *fondeur ciseleur* again had his opportunity, and he made remarkably good use of it. Popular as modelled and chased brass mounts were during the earlier periods which we have passed in review, at the introduction of the "Empire" they were more extensively employed than ever. So important, indeed, was the part they played, that, without their presence, many a choice example of the style which is treasured in the most famous collections, and with which the proud possessors could never be induced to part "for love or money," would not attract a second glance. In order to illustrate this point, let the reader imagine Fig. 4, Plate II.—a piece worth many thousands of pounds—shorn of its brass work. My meaning will then be made perfectly clear. The effect of these mounts, severe in character, demonstrating to the utmost the rare possibilities of modelling, casting, and chasing, and standing out against their background of choice mahogany, or sombre ebony—almost invariably the former—is indescribably rich and truly regal. The details in these, and in all pieces conceived in the "Classic" spirit, to which the designer paid most particular attention, were the anthemion, the bay leaf arranged in wreaths and other forms; the laurel, the myrtle, and the oak leaf with acorns, similarly disposed; the heavy "Roman" acanthus scroll, foliated rosettes and "bosses";

"Classic" capitals—particularly the "Corinthian;" the "egg," and "egg-and-tongue" mouldings; "pearl" beading; the sacrificial heads—bullocks' rams', etc.; stiff festoons of drapery; sphinxes, lions, eagles, and other figures, mythological, animal, and human. The enrichment of Fig, 4, Plate II., is as comprehensive an object lesson in the decorative elements of this period as could well be found in a single example. In addition to the employment of brass in the form of mounts such as those illustrated and described, simple lines of the same metal were, very frequently, inlaid into the mahogany, with very chaste and pleasing results. Reverting, for a moment, to chairs and seats, I may mention that, when not made in mahogany, with brass mounts or gilded carving, they were painted in light and subtle shades of cream, green, pink, or blue, and touched up here and there with gilt, the mouldings and ornaments generally being thrown into prominence in that way. Gilt, in one guise or another, was a very prominent feature throughout the Napoleonic furnishing era in France, which, from more than one point of view, may be, perhaps, regarded as an age of brass.

A word or two, in conclusion, with regard to the character of the design of the "Empire" textile fabrics used for furniture coverings and draperies. Sometimes they were bold, free, and floral in treatment, as in the coverings of Fig. 4, Plate I., and Figs. 1 and 3, Plate II., but more generally they were stiff and conventional, as in Fig. 3, Plate I., Fig. 6, Plate III., and Figs. 1, 2, and 6, Plate IV. The pattern was often composed solely of a "powdering," which consisted of a simple wreath, or even of the Imperial Bee alone, without any decorative accompaniment.

In taking leave of the "Empire," after having noted its historical associations and seeing what it eventually became, we cannot but arrive at the conclusion that, great and liberal as was the encouragement afforded by Napoleon to the arts

REFERENCE IN TEXT. See pages 275–276

—and he could not well have done more in that direction than he did—he was fully repaid by the refined dignity and magnificence which were instilled into the material environment of his reign by the genius and instrumentality of such men as Percier, Fontaine, David, and their co-workers.

# THE "NEW ART" IN FRANCE

It is common to regard, and speak of, the temperament of the French people as one to which perpetual change and excitement are essential; and when the Gallic disposition, so instinct with vivacity, so full of *verve*, is contrasted with our own, something more than a slender foundation for that view may perhaps appear to exist. Proud as we may be, and unquestionably are, of our national characteristics, it is useless to deny the fact that the attitude of mind which we present under certain circumstances, and our actions, when compared with those of the French, must appear to the people of other nations sluggish and phlegmatic in the extreme; though which traits are the more desirable to cultivate is quite another matter, and one which does not call for discussion here.

Yet, in some respects our neighbours across the Channel have displayed, from time to time, a conservatism altogether unlooked for in a people possessed of such rare versatility; this was especially the case in the attitude which they assumed towards all matters appertaining to the arts of house furnishing and decoration as practised by them during nearly the whole of the nineteenth century. I would not, for one moment, suggest that there was not much admirable work done during that period by the designers and craftsmen of France, who were determined to sustain the old, and respected, traditions of their land. That task they accomplished without difficulty; they easily succeeded, moreover, in retaining their supremacy in the particular walks with which long acquaintance had made them familiar—a supremacy that has not by any means been wrested from them yet. It is true that they sustained old traditions; but, up to within a few years of the close of

the last century, that was all that they attempted to do, or, at any rate, it was all that they succeeded in doing. Independently of this, they accomplished practically nothing worth recording; to all appearance they were absolutely barren of originality of any kind or description.

So far as progress was concerned, the "full stop" came in France with the final development of the "Empire," in as full measure, and in exactly the same way, as the fount of inspiration appeared to run dry, and a period of deadly dulness, almost without a single redeeming feature, came over the furnishing of our own homes when the pencil dropped for ever from the hand of Sheraton. It yet remains to be proved whether a new, and really serious, chapter has actually been commenced, or whether the few hesitant and fragmentary lines that have recently been added to the old story are simply expressions of transient thoughts, which lack the power and virility essential to arrest and hold the attention for any appreciable length of time.

What, then, were the French cabinet makers and designers doing during this lapse of so many years? A study of their published works, and of the records of the displays which they organised at their great Expositions Universelles, and for those held in other countries, will furnish a conclusive answer to that question; an answer, moreover, that will fully bear out the observations with which this chapter commences. Those records will show that, for many a long year, indeed from the fall of Napoleon to within the last decade of the century in which that event occurred, the French designer remained perfectly content to study the work of those who had gone before; "rescuing" every piece that had survived the depredations consequent upon many political upheavals; treasuring them carefully, and holding them in such veneration that any attempt to improve upon, or depart from, them would probably have been regarded as sacrilege. Every "Department" of the country was ransacked for authentic

examples. Such as were brought to light, and could be acquired by the nation to supplement the incomparable store already possessed, were eagerly seized upon, and conveyed to places of honour in the national palaces, châteaux, and museums, where students, for generation after generation, were taken in order that they might imbibe, and put into practice to the best of their ability, the lessons which these relics of bygone days had to teach.

More than that even was done. In no country in the world have the names, and histories, of artists and art-craftsmen been handed down to posterity, and the beauty of their masterpieces placed on permanent record, so that he who runs may read, as in France. Volumes upon volumes—many of them truly monumental works, produced without any regard to the question of the expenditure of time, labour, or money—have come from the press, to tell the world of the glories of French furniture and decoration throughout the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries. The services of the most gifted artists have been retained to reproduce those glories, so far as possible, by means of pen, pencil, and brush; and, with modern developments in photography and photographic reproduction, the camera has been set to work to render yet more perfect this ever-growing chronicle of the great things done for the beautification of the home by those furniture designers and makers whom even kings delighted to honour.

It is hardly to be wondered at, therefore, that, with the French, admiration of the "François-Premier," and "Henri-Deux"; of the "Louis-Quatorze," "Louis-Quinze," "Louis-Seize," and "Empire," developed almost into a creed, amongst the numerous adherents of which, for over half a century, there was not the slightest indication of heresy. Old models were studied and copied until it would seem that the idea of any serious departure from them was not within the bounds of possibility; and so it came about that

the styles I have named, but more particularly the "Henri-Deux," "Louis-Quinze," "Louis-Seize," and "Empire," were "served up," so to express it, year after year, and decade after decade, until people became so accustomed to their apparently inevitable re-appearances that nothing else was seriously looked for in the land of their origin.

Perfect, both in design and execution, as the French renderings of those styles always have been, and are still, there came a time at last when a certain number of artists, rebelling against this constant and slavish following of old and familiar forms, determined, so far as they were concerned at all events, that such a course should be no longer pursued. They recognised plainly that, if continued, its enervating effects on the minds of designer, craftsman, and public alike would inevitably culminate in artistic atrophy. A new line, they insisted, should be struck out by them at any cost, and the all-too-prevalent styles, to which they had for so long been faithful, should know them no more.

It is affirmed, I believe, by scientists, to be an indisputable fact that, if certain organs, gifts, or faculties be permitted to fall into absolute disuse for any length of time, they become, imperceptibly it may be but none the less surely, weaker; while, if the period during which they are not employed be prolonged unduly and past all reasonable limits, the result must surely be complete local paralysis, if not something still more serious. This has, of course, been conclusively proved within the experience of most of us. Must we, then, fall back on this theory, or rather recognised natural law, to furnish an explanation for the temporary loss, on the part of the French designer, of the power to create fresh ideas? Truly, their faculty for adaptation and reproduction was constantly kept in active training; but that was to the almost total exclusion of everything else. What was the natural result? Whatever originality those designers and craftsmen possessed—and we cannot by any process of reason-

ing arrive at the conclusion that it was absolutely non-existent for so long—they kept so completely in subjection that people became accustomed to its absence, and were tempted to regard it in the light of a negligible quantity.

This condition of affairs prevailed from the time of Napoleon the First until about the year 1890, or even somewhat later. Then, at last, indications appeared again, slight, it is true, but none the less definite and unmistakable, that a new spirit, or the old one revived and appearing in a new guise, was at work. Strange and novel creations, bearing no relationship whatever to, and, indeed, differing entirely from, those with which the French had become so accustomed by long usage—in fact until they seemed almost to have become part and parcel of their very existence!—commenced to appear in odd corners of the furnishing showrooms of Paris. As a certain demand for them seemed to have been created, they found their way, by degrees, though somewhat timidly at first, into the shop windows. As a natural result, people commenced to wonder what they were, and whence they came, and to talk about them. They certainly appealed to the taste for novelty inherent in human nature. Then came the "craze."

Most of us have from early childhood been taught something to the effect that it is usually undesirable to throw away even dirty water unless there is some certain prospect of obtaining clean to take its place; and the lesson conveyed in that old adage is one which even would-be creators of new styles may well take to heart. To what source, then, did these artistic protestants, who were responsible for such startling innovations, look for inspiration before getting rid of what they regarded as "dirty water," and finally forsaking the wells upon which they had depended for so long? In considering this point, we must not fail to bear in mind that it is more than probable that every one of the artistic agitators in question had every detail of the historic styles at

his fingers' ends, and would unquestionably have been able to make a comfortable living had he continued in the time-honoured paths of his forefathers. That, however, was just the thing that none of them was content to do. It was their opinion that they had all done this for far too long a period; so they finally and irrevocably decided that a strenuous effort must be made to strike off the shackles of time-worn traditions, and break boldly away from long-accepted custom; apparently agreeing with Carlyle in his pronouncement that "custom doth make dotards of us all."

These artists, therefore, did their best, in the first place, to forget, so far as lay within their power, that such styles as the "Henri-Deux," "Louis-Quinze," "Empire," and all the rest, ever existed. They set out with the fixed determination to originate an entirely new style for themselves. But the artist, I need not say, cannot originate a new style without inspiration from some source or another any more successfully than could the Israelites of old fabricate their full tale of bricks when deprived of the all-essential straw. Inspiration had to be sought for somewhere, and, in their pursuit of it, these founders of the new school went from one extreme to another. For many years, as we have seen, they had been practically "steeped" in Conventionality, working under set conditions which bound them hand-and-foot, so to speak, and permitted little or no lattitude. In fact, to all intents and purposes, their work was ready "cut-and-dried" for them. Recognised forms, no appreciable variation from which was to be tolerated, had to be followed exactly in every particular, no matter however much the artist or craftsmen may have had the inclination to improve upon them. The self-same set of time-honoured details, too, was always ready to hand, to be introduced as occasion might demand—and it generally did demand; so, practically all that remained to be done was to unite these various elements. But, even in accomplishing that, the exercise of

little or no ingenuity was demanded; all had simply to be brought together in such a manner as to constitute one harmonious whole, resembling specific old and familiar models as closely as possible. Those models, it must be noted, were so well known throughout the land, even by the "common people," that any radical deviation from their lines or details was certain to be detected, as I have indicated, and the chances were that, should any such be discovered, it would meet with but scant favour.

Having, then, determined to abolish this state of things in so far as its existence affected their own work, the designers whose productions we shall presently consider positively refused to be bound any longer by hard-and-fast convention, or be trammelled by custom. Desiring to be allowed an absolutely free hand, to the end that whatever creative faculties they possessed might have full play, uninfluenced by antiquated custom or tradition, they harked back from the well-worn paths they had traversed from their youth up, and returned straight to Nature, in order that they might obtain their ideas fresh, and unsullied by passage through the brains of others—direct from the only true source of all Beauty. Verily, a more desirable course could not be adopted by anybody, nor one calculated to lead to better results, provided always—and here comes the crux of the whole matter—that Nature be approached in the proper spirit, and that the lessons she has to teach be correctly learned and not misconstrued.

Pitfalls, however, are to be found almost everywhere; even in situations where their presence might be least suspected. That there were many, and dangerous ones, in the road which this little band elected to follow, is made painfully evident by many of the productions which they have given to the world in the course of little over a decade, and by which the success of their undertaking must be estimated.

But before discussing the quality and character of this work, I must mention the style and title by which it has already been distinguished, and by which it is generally known to-day. Whether the originators of the new movement are themselves responsible for its nomenclature—"L'Art Nouveau"—it is impossible for me to say with any degree of certainty; but, considering all things, I am inclined to affirm that they are not. The title, whether in French or English, savours somewhat of the up-to-date shopkeeper, anxious to endow his goods with a telling description calculated to attract and arrest attention, and so promote business, and would hardly be included in the vocabulary of the conscientious and enthusiastic artist. In imagination, we can almost hear the satisfied and gleeful chuckle with which an inspiration, so "happy" from the salesman's standpoint, was hailed when the title was first coined. It is on a par with, and no better nor worse than, the commercial employment, now so painfully common, of the word "art" as an adjective to describe all sorts and conditions of things, the first impetus to the use of which in such an association was given by its novel application, by a certain go-ahead firm, to exceptionally delicate, subtle, and really beautiful shades of colour brought out in dainty textile fabrics some years ago. It has since been "dragged-in" to do service in all manner of unlooked-for associations, being applied to practically everything that can, with, or even without, any possible excuse, be so designated. So-called "art colours"—could any designation be more absurd?—we have had with us for some few years now, and they seem likely to remain. They are still being merrily retailed at "a-penny-three," while "art pots"—many of them the most fearful and wonderful creations the eye of man has ever beheld—and "art" goodness-knows-what-besides continue to swell the draper's "Special-Bargain-Sale" lists, and fill the souls of ignorant and unwary purchasers with

sensations of the keenest satisfaction at being enabled to introduce "Art" into their home. They know it *must* be "Art," for it had it on the label—"and *so* cheap too!" Last, but by no means least, what a difference it makes to the balance-sheets of those who manufacture, as well as of those who factor, this "Art for the Million." They alone, could we see them, would furnish the most unmistakable indications that the "discovery" of this little word as a trade description must be counted among the most brilliant strokes of the kind in modern times.

"Art," then, in its indiscriminate application for business purposes, must be regarded simply as a "catch word," meaning little or nothing, and as, more often than not, misapplied. We may, I think, class "L'Art Nouveau," or "New Art," as we have it in this country, under the same category, and look upon it as equally objectionable. Art, accepting the true and all-embracing meaning of the word in its strict and proper sense, is from all eternity; and to describe it as "new" is to perpetrate as absurd an anachronism as could well be imagined. "Art," employed as meaning merely a technical process or method of procedure, is, of course, an entirely different thing, and its use in such a connection is, of course, quite permissible; but it is not thus associated with this new movement in France and in other countries. The "New Art" bases its claim to attention and respect, not upon innovations in the direction of ways and means of manufacture, for it is not entitled to any special notice in that regard; but upon the supposed novelty of the spirit underlying it all; a spirit which, to tell the truth, is not in itself fresh, but is the old one, which has, by some means or another, gone sadly astray. With regard to this "New Art," it has been said, and with some measure of reason, that, on the one hand, most of it which is really new is not art, and that which is really art is not new; and I do not think that the situation could be summed up much more

correctly or concisely. We may accept, without hesitation, as a comparatively new expression of art—but further than that we cannot go—all that is best in it; and it must not be imagined for a moment that there is no good in it at all: the very reverse is the case.

Notwithstanding all this, the name has been coined, has found favour—or, in vulgar parlance, "caught on"—it is in general use; and, that being so, I suppose I also must fall into line, and, if ambiguity is to be avoided, make use of it for want of a better if I am to make my meaning clear. I shall, however, feel more comfortable in doing so after having placed my humble protest on record.

Were I to discuss fully, and in a critical vein, the merits of the "New Art" under all its aspects, it would be essential for me to deal exhaustively with the old and vexed question of Naturalism *versus* Conventionalism. To do so here is neither possible nor necessary; for, on the one hand to set out and debate the case in full, with all its many *pros* and *cons*, to say nothing of side issues, would occupy far too much space; and, on the other, the matter has been so completely threshed out in the past by abler pens than mine that it may, I think, be regarded as settled for all time.

When going to Nature for inspiration the great aim of the decorative or applied artist—and the designer of furniture must unquestionably be included under one of those denominations—should not be to copy slavishly her multitudinous forms, except, of course, in the preparation of "studies" in order that they may be impressed on the mind, and the lessons they have to teach be more thoroughly learned. He should search for, and, when found, analyse and endeavour to grasp thoroughly the spirit underlying them all; to become so permeated with this spirit, that it may be reapplied under fresh conditions without any conscious mental effort, and with such aptitude that the outcome shall

partake, in every particular, of that absolute sense of fitness which is to be found to perfection in Nature alone.

With the painter and the pictorial artist the case is entirely different. *They* may copy, as closely as they may be disposed or able, and with pre-Raphaelite minuteness if they possess the patience ; and the more faithful in every respect their copies are to the great original, the more perfect are they likely to be. The disciples of applied art are not by any means so situated—very frequently they wish sincerely that they were. *Their* ideas are not destined finally to be interpreted by means of pen, pencil, or brush, upon card, paper, canvas, or any other passive material capable of receiving them without presenting any appreciable obstacles. Those ideas have to be wrought in metals, precious and base ; to be tortured into beauty of form and richness of effect by means of the forge, crucible, melting-pot, hammer, pincers, graver, and many another instrument devised to subdue the materials' stubborn natures. For the interpretation of those ideas, the whole equipment of the saw-mill and joiner's factories, with their wondrous machinery, cutters, fitters, carvers, inlayers, painters, enamellers, and polishers, are ready and waiting ; the potters' kilns, lathes, moulds, and pastes ; the glass-blowers' furnaces, crucibles, and pipes, all have their part to play ; while, in great weaving-sheds, the looms are prepared for the reception of newly-filled bobbins, shuttles, and fresh-cut "cards," in order that they, too, may be set in motion, to contribute their *quota* towards the ultimate beautification of the home.

Thus it is that the decorative artist—or, to speak more precisely, the applied artist—is bound and restricted at almost every step by harassing conditions, many of which are most difficult to understand and to obey in practice. If he is to prove successful in the profession of his choice, he must do far more than merely supplement the possession of the creative spirit, or genius—call it what you will—by the

acquisition of skill in drawing, and a knowledge of the cardinal principles of design. In addition to all this—and it is, of course, a *sine quâ non*—he must make himself acquainted with the dry technicalities of those manufacturing processes connected with the particular crafts or trades through the medium of which he intends the fancies of his brain to be brought to light in the tangible form he wishes them to assume ; technicalities that dictate to him what he may, and what he may not, do ; laying down their inviolable laws with that exactitude which we generally associate with the traditional government of the oft-quoted Medes and Persians of old. It is here that the great difficulty arises. Ideas which, when skilfully carried into effect, may be passing beautiful in one metal, cannot be successfully interpreted in another ; in wood their execution would be quite impossible ; while to render them in pottery, glass, or textile fabrics may be equally out of the question. Yet, they could, one and all, be presented to the eye with the most scrupulous exactitude by means of the pen, pencil, or brush. In the foregoing explanation is, I think, summed up the vital difference that subsists between those distinct expressions of art commonly distinguished by the descriptions, "Fine," "Illustrative," "Decorative," and "Applied," but it is a difference whose very existence is but little known to, and therefore not appreciated by, the public at large.

Yet again, the applied artist spends, or is supposed to spend, his life in racking his brains for the production of designs the only reason for the existence of which is that they shall, in the end, serve some distinct, and, in the vast majority of cases, useful purpose which has been duly specified, understood, and provided for from the first. All other conditions having been fulfilled, it is for him to see, if he desire, of course, to do the best that lies within his power, that the particular purpose in view, with its individual requirements, whatever they may chance to be, is

served as completely and consistently as possible; that the demands of comfort, or utility, or of both, are fully satisfied, and in a manner pleasing to the eye; that the quality of absolute fitness be observable in every particular. Lastly—and here comes a consideration which must be kept in view throughout if our artist depend upon the receipt and execution of commissions for a living—he must make sure that the ideas in question are capable of being put into shape and manufactured with such economy of material, time, thought, labour, and money, that they may be certain of a ready welcome from the much-abused "middleman," and of being retailed at a reasonable, if not a "cutting," price, which will lead to such a demand for them that the initial expense of their manufacture and introduction to the public—often a very costly process—may be recovered, and recovered, too, with the addition of a reasonable profit.

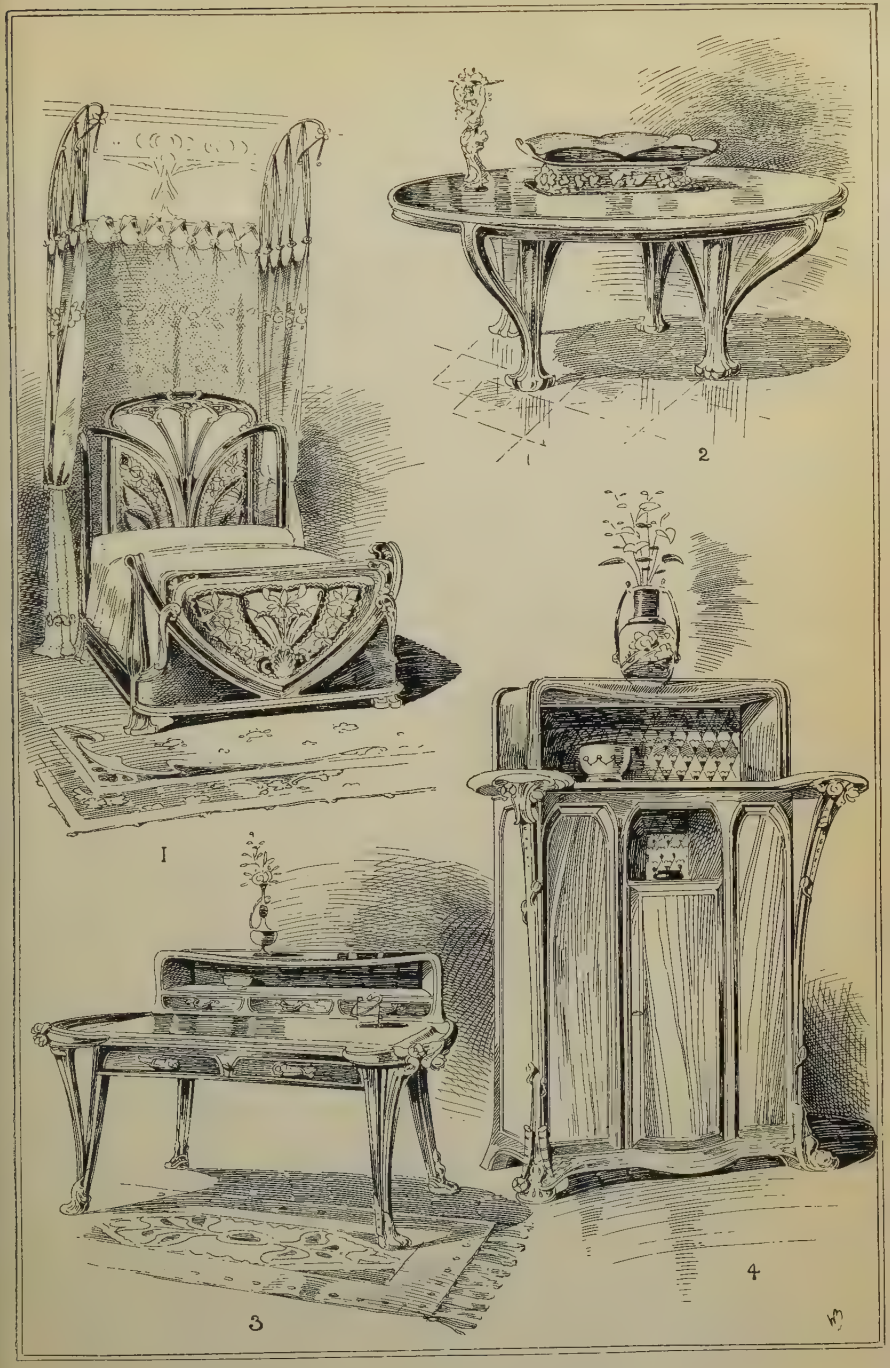
With all this present in our mind, it will readily be understood that the cultivation of "Applied," as distinct from "Fine," art is very far from being a simple matter; and that the life of its disciples is "not a happy one"; or if it should chance to be so, what happiness there is in it is not attained without protracted and conscientious labour and study; nor is it unmixed with anxiety and disappointment, even in the end. Even with artists of the greatest skill, ideas which appear to be practicable enough as finished designs on paper positively refuse to be "worked-out" in their entirety, with the result that modifications have to be made here and there, often necessitating the sacrifice of the most cherished features, and the consequent loss of much of their special character. Various details cannot be allowed, because their retention would, says the manufacturer, "cost too much"; they may not be "the sort of thing the public wants"; certain colours, upon which the entire beauty of the general effect would depend, cannot be produced in the particular material to be employed; or, if everything else

be absolutely right and in order, the expenditure of many months' thought and labour may be, and indeed often is, brought to nought by a flaw in material, the over-heating of a kiln, the letting-out of a furnace, or some other unlooked-for and utterly unexpected *contretemps*. I have gone into these matters at some length, for, as will presently become apparent, in considering the principles and practice of the "New Art" from the strictly critical point of view, it was quite impossible to avoid doing so if the subject is to be discussed with any measure of thoroughness.

How were these French art reformers situated, then, after all? They would not be bound by the vexatious conditions and restrictions inevitably involved by following any particular traditions, styles, or phases of taste except their own; they would be free, obeying no laws except those of Nature; and, as we shall presently discover, they were quite prepared, on occasion, to take considerable liberties with even those. Under these circumstances what occurred at the outset was inevitable. Having broken all the laws by which they had previously been restrained, and having completely thrown aside all their fetters, or rather fondly imagining that they had done so, they hied them away from the haunts and purlieus of towns and cities, leaving behind them all the old associations of urban life, with its bricks and mortar, to revel in the glorious freshness of the country—the very Temple of Nature herself, with its virgin wealth of unexplored treasures. The joy attendant upon their newly-acquired liberty proved altogether too much at first for brains so long unaccustomed to such an experience. Their mental balance was disturbed; the mistake of over-indulgence was committed; and, at the beginning, freedom was sadly abused. Liberty led to licence, and the abuse of licence brought about the existence of a condition of affairs that can only be described as absolutely chaotic. Sketch-books were filled with a multitude of studies of natural growths, forms, and colourings. The wildest and

most fantastic imaginings, based upon them, were conceived and transferred to paper ; imaginings which, it was fondly hoped, would startle the whole of the civilised world, and charm by their beauty, boldness of conception, and striking originality, when they grew into lasting and tangible form under the skilled hands of the craftsman, with his many and varied materials, and innumerable facilities for manipulation and transformation at his command. But here came the first command to "halt." Conditions and restrictions imposed by taste and style *might* be cast to the winds with impunity, without any one but those indulging in such a liberty either suffering, or reaping any benefit, thereby ; and cast to the winds they were. But when it came to attempting to ignore the hard-and-fast technical conditions and restrictions inseparable from many processes of manufacture—processes of manufacture, it must be understood, upon which these enthusiasts absolutely depended for the practical interpretation of their ideas—where was the free, perfect, and unfettered liberty ? It was found to be non-existent. Difficulties presented themselves at every step, and many of them proved to be altogether insurmountable, although there was a vast deal of kicking against the pricks, and the most ingenious expedients were tried to circumvent them, in order that the new school might be entirely free from all suspicion of convention. The attainment of that happy state defied the wit of man ; and, in the end—not, however, until after an exceptionally severe struggle—some measure of resignation and obedience to the dictates of the inevitable had to be exercised, though it was almost invariably accompanied by a most emphatic and unmistakable protest.

When they stated their intention to follow Nature, and to obey Nature's laws alone, these artists, though really meaning to carry out their programme, quite neglected to bear in mind the important fact, that natural growths and forms, wondrously beautiful, and indeed incomparable, as

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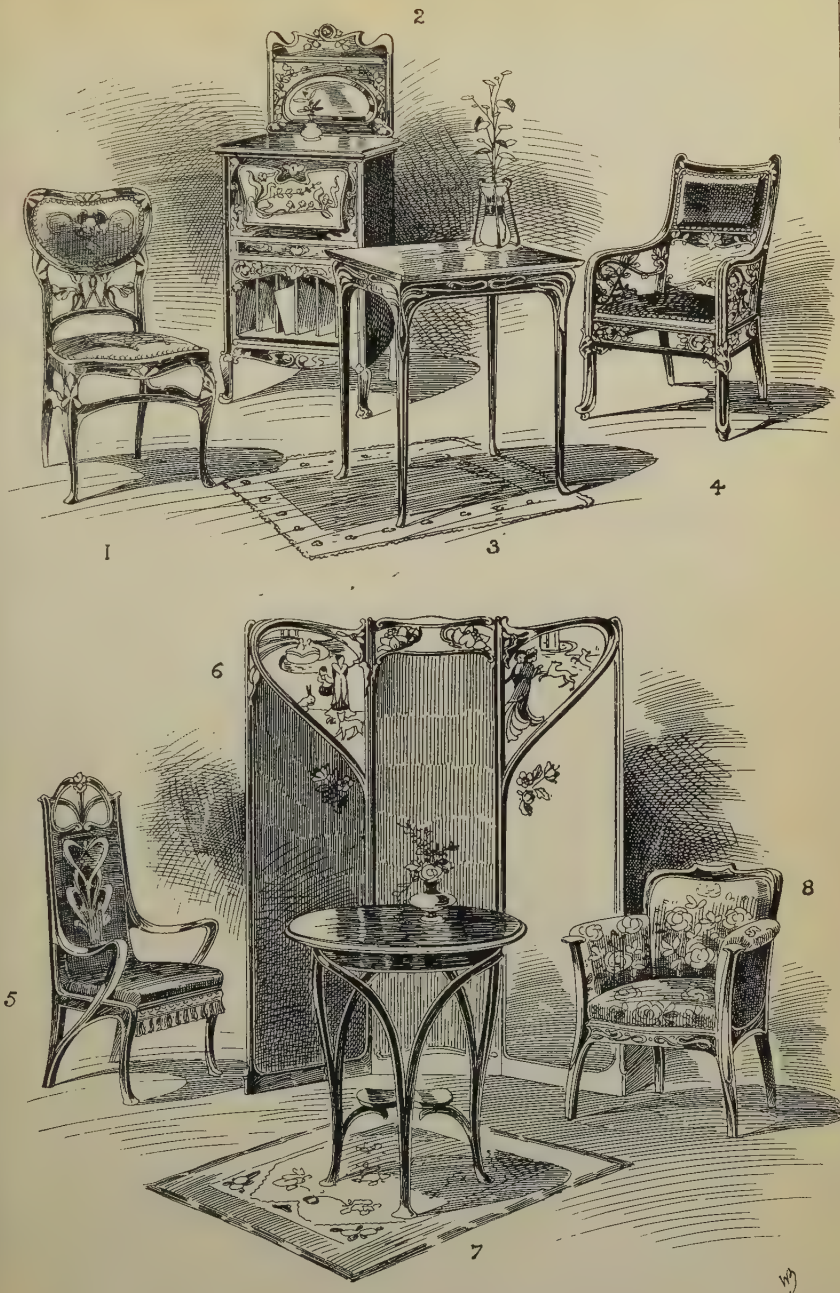
they are amid their own proper surroundings, in the field, garden, meadow, and woodland; clothing the hills, and filling the valleys with verdure; were never intended, and are absolutely unfitted, for the performance of the thousand-and-one duties associated with the furnishings of the modern home. Primitive man might be, indeed had to be, content with the service of a tree-stump for a table, a log for a seat, the shells of nuts or rinds of fruit for his cooking and feeding utensils, and Mother Earth for his couch; but we are primitive man no longer. With every generation since Eve rejoiced over the advent of her first-born, fresh needs, or supposed needs, have arisen or have been created. From the very first moment when man, as a "thinking animal," discovered that he was endowed with the inventive faculty, it has been his desire and endeavour to satisfy those needs, finding, as he has always done, that Nature makes but scant provision for them on her own account, preferring to leave the supply to the ingenuity of her children. It must be recognised that an overwhelming preponderance of those needs has been simply an accompaniment of advances in civilisation by which they have been created; they were never experienced, nor dreamed of, by man in his original and natural state; they are essentially artificial, and must, therefore, be provided for by artificial means. Nature supplied furnishings for the cave-dwellings of pre-historic periods—though even they had to be cut and hewn by mortal beings, and fulfilled fairly well the modest requirements of those days; but if she were looked to nowadays to fit out even the humblest cottage in the least pretentious manner imaginable, her resources would indeed be found sadly at fault. No. She provides the materials with a free and generous hand; the power to fashion them to our will is ours to a very great degree, and we are left to do with them the best that we are able. Nature will do many things, but design or provide our furniture ready-made for us she will

not ; neither need we look to her for models that will serve as object-lessons to show us how that task is to be accomplished, unless we are content to return to primeval ways of living, and to sacrifice many of the actual necessaries and nearly all the luxuries of modern life. Those who are prepared to do this are, of course, absolutely at liberty to do so, if they can find a place sufficiently far removed from civilisation to permit of it ; and no one will say them "nay." Let them, by all means, if such be their inclination, look to Nature for instruction in the art of furniture designing, and return actually to first principles ; but they must not expect every one else to share their tastes and opinions.

It was through losing sight altogether of this aspect of affairs, either through absence of mind, or by reason of a fixed determination to ignore it, that the "New Artists" committed one of their most fatal mistakes, and one which led to the production of monstrosities in the way of furniture at the sight of which we are almost inclined to gasp with astonishment not unmixed with dismay. It would really seem as if some of them argued in the following strain: "The gnarled stump of a tree, with a board placed across the top, acts very satisfactorily as a table ; a log makes a serviceable and safe, if somewhat uncomfortable, seat; we can hang our hats and coats very well upon the lopped and broken boughs and twigs of a young sapling: let us, therefore, reproduce the tree-trunk, with its gnarled and ugly roots ; the log, with its knots and rough bark ; and the sapling, with its multitudinous young shoots, as accurately as we can, and place them in our entrance-hall and dining-room at home—furniture fresh from the very Fountain-Head of all Art and Beauty—surely we cannot go wrong if we do this."

It may possibly be urged by some reader that, in the foregoing paragraph, I have permitted my imagination, warped by some deep-rooted and unreasonable prejudice

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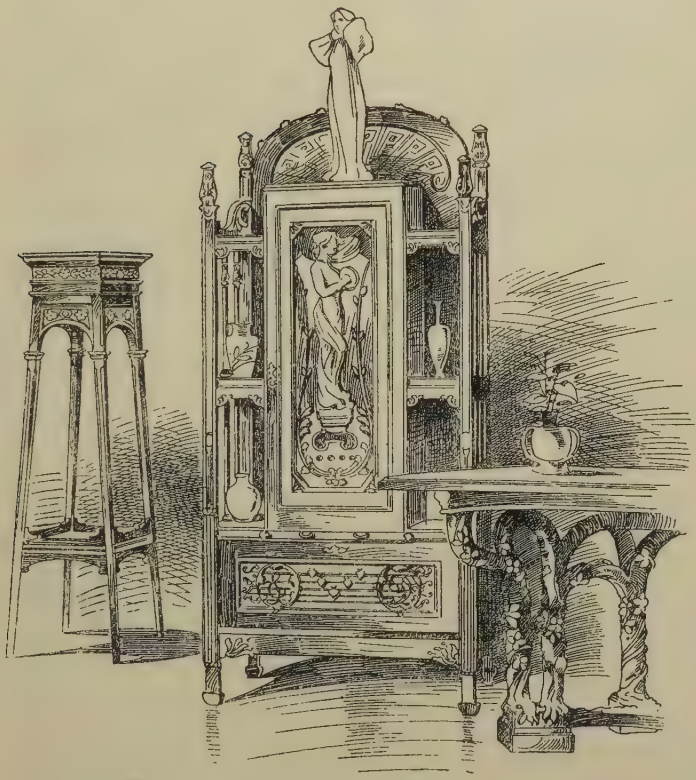
against the "New Art," to run riot. To any such indictment, were it brought against me, I would most emphatically plead "not guilty." In the first place, the idea of the



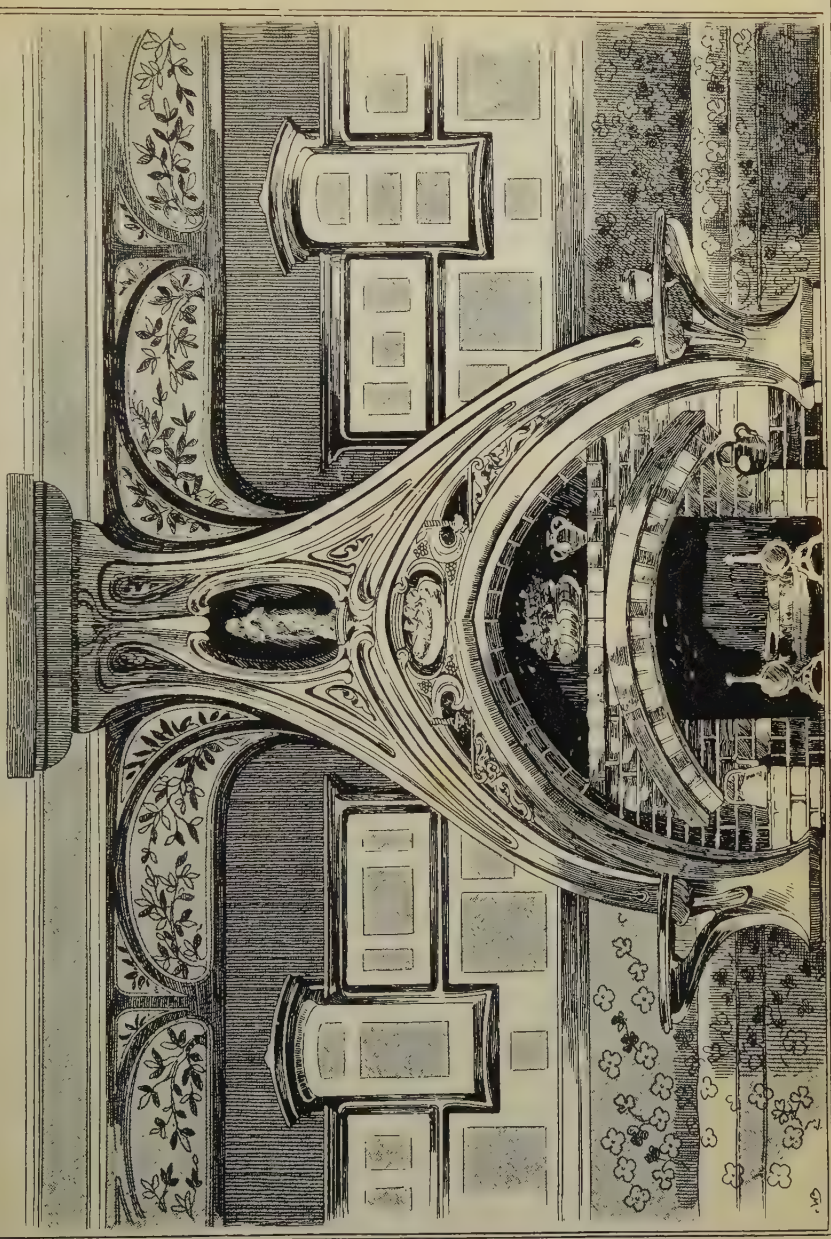
Two Examples of Restrained "New Art" and a Naturalesque "Tree-Trunk" Table (French)

reproduction of the tree trunk, log, and sapling, extreme and utterly absurd as it may seem, is not my own; neither is it introduced as an imaginary possibility. Those articles,

as I have described them, were positively shown in all seriousness at the last Paris Exhibition by two of the leading exponents and pioneers of the "New Art," not as garden furniture, but as designed, and made of the choicest woods, and at enormous cost, for the homes of wealthy patrons. In the second place, if accused of being prejudiced against the movement itself, even in the most infinitesimal degree, my defence would simply be to affirm, if possible with still greater emphasis than before, that the "New Art" in some of its phases has no keener or more enthusiastic admirer than the writer of these lines.

I should not have laid such great stress upon this great failing of the movement had it been revealed occasionally only, and in momentary lapses from "sweet reasonableness," constituting but a rare exception to a predominating good taste; but it cannot, unfortunately, be regarded in that light. On the contrary, this failing stood out prominently as one of the leading characteristics of the style at its inception, and though, in the course of time, radical changes for the better have taken place, the same weakness remains, though in a far smaller degree.

This contempt, whether intentional or not, of the sense of fitness and of the limitations of material, was everywhere apparent in the early days of the movement; even at the present time, though vast strides have been made in the proper direction, it is still more or less in evidence, but, fortunately, in a vastly modified form. The constant endeavour to press certain materials into service for the execution of tasks for which they were never intended, and are obviously unfitted, still remains; and that endeavour is inspired and directed by such rare determination—or obstinacy, as some might describe it—that technical impossibilities are almost achieved. Many artists of the new school continue to produce designs with the fixed intention that they shall be carried out in certain stated materials, irrespective

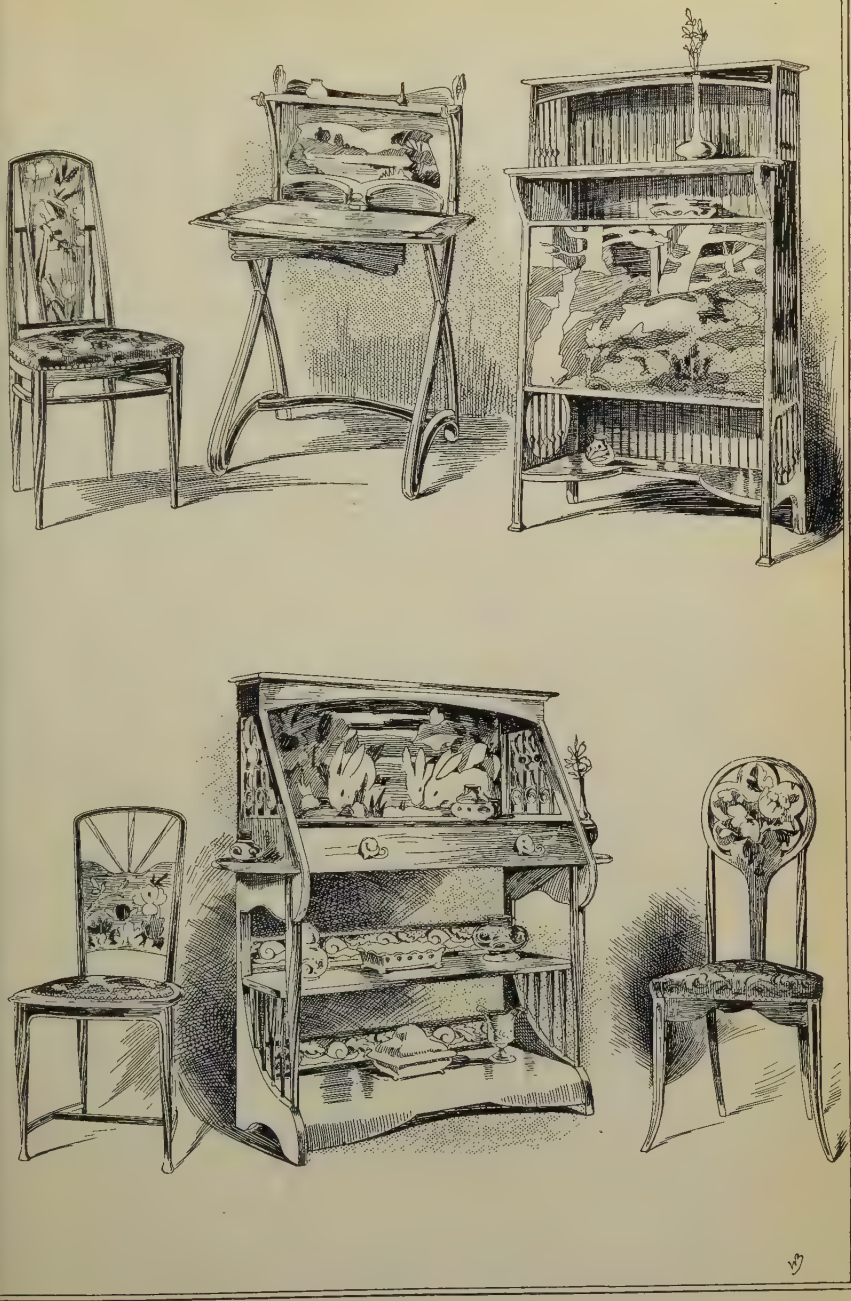


of the important fact that the very nature of the materials selected renders the consummation of the idea excessively difficult, and, moreover, costly almost beyond calculation. When all is said and done, and the task is finally accomplished, the result is, in many respects, far from everything that could be desired. However fine the conception of the work in question may be in itself, it is generally too apparent that, in its execution, the craftsman was persistently beset with difficulties which called for constant struggle to combat ; at the same time, the impression is conveyed that a far better result might have been secured with much greater economy and by the expenditure of one tenth, or even less, of the labour, had greater judgment been exercised in the selection of materials or methods of procedure.

We are forced, therefore, to the conclusion that what we have before us has only been accomplished through the absolutely uncalled-for misapplication of both ingenuity and energy ; and any such feeling cannot but detract most seriously from what satisfaction there may be in regarding the outcome. In almost every impress of the tool, the craftsman seems to be saying "Behold what enormous obstacles I have had to surmount. Note the skill with which I have overcome them!" We accord unstinted admiration readily, indeed instinctively, for the extraordinary mastery over both tool and material displayed ; we cannot do otherwise. At the same time we are thinking that the majority of the obstacles should never have been there, to *be* surmounted, and that no valid excuse can really be put forward to justify their presence. Practically we experience the same feeling as that which affects us sometimes at amateur industrial exhibitions, bazaars, and functions of a similar nature, when we are confronted with some such exhibit as, say, "A model of Westminster Abbey ; constructed entirely of burnt matches, by the aid of a bent pin ; took three years to make." The reader will be familiar with the sort of exhibit to which I refer.

To illustrate my meaning in writing the foregoing paragraphs upon the "New Art," many most forcible examples might be brought forward, but it will be sufficient for my present purpose if I refer in particular to the marquetry which constitutes one of the chief features of the furniture and woodwork of the school which we are at present discussing. Much of it is so marvellously clever in execution as almost to defy belief in its being marquetry at all ; yet it misses its aim, viz., the simulation of painting, which is, of course, altogether out of range. The most ambitious, elaborate, and intricate schemes, both pictorial and decorative, teeming with minute detail, and glowing with almost every tone and shade of colour that can be compounded from the painter's palette—really capable of being rendered with any degree of accuracy by the brush alone—are conceived, prepared, and placed in the hands of the marquetry-cutter, to be reproduced by him by means of his veneers, natural and stained, fashioned by the knife, saw, and other appliances for their working. He applies himself to the task with the conscientious desire to make the best "job" he can of it ; but what a "job" it is ! The markets of the world have to be ransacked for veneers of the required figure, colours, and shades ; and they cannot always be obtained. When they—or at all events the nearest to them—are secured, the task of cutting and inlaying follows ; and frequently, in order to get as near to the desired effect as possible, these veneers, many of which are most awkward to "work" even under normal and favourable conditions, have to be cut and fitted into their respective places in pieces of almost microscopic proportions, involving an enormous expenditure of time and labour.

The result of all this, as I have already pointed out, is oftentimes a veritable triumph of technical skill ; yet, withal, it is nothing but an attempt to accomplish the impossible, or, in other words, to rival the choicest productions of the



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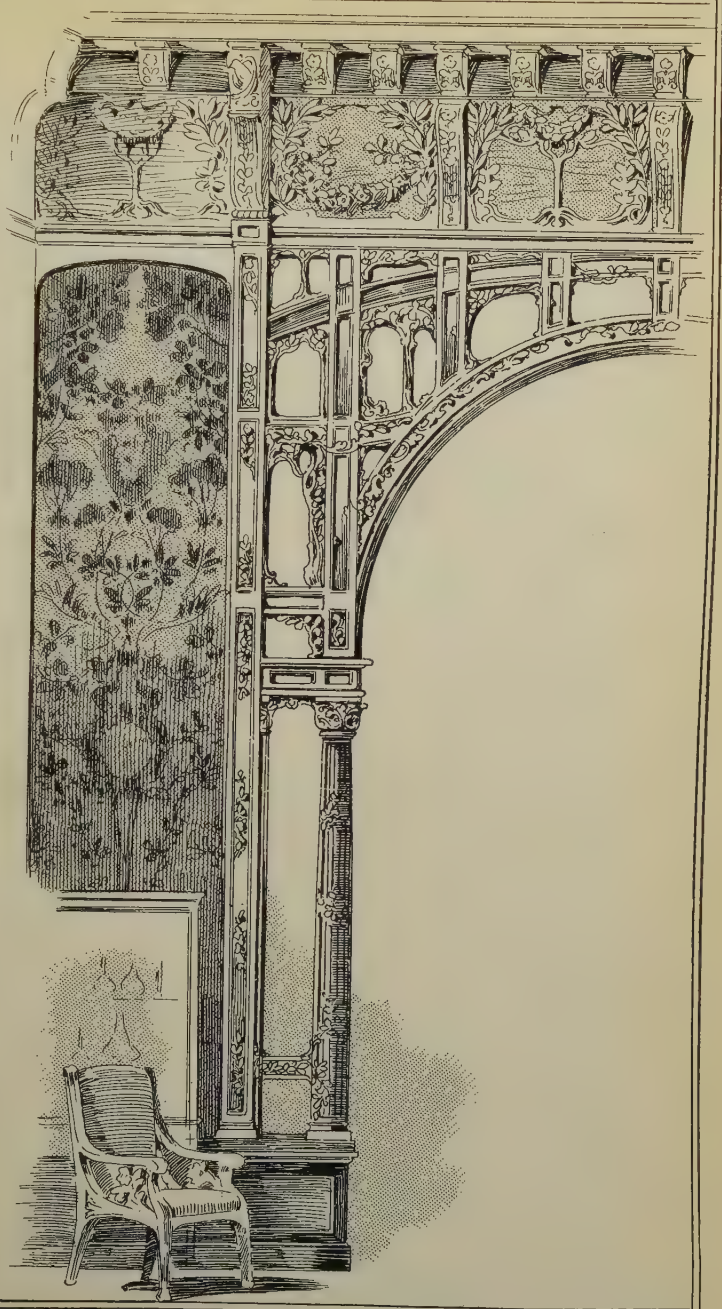
palette and brush through the medium of marquetry. It is not for me to enlarge here upon the possibilities and limitations of inlay as a means of decoration, but I may point out that, broadly speaking, it was never devised, nor intended, for the interpretation of schemes in which minute detail predominates, nor for the rendering of complicated harmonies of colouring; it is altogether beyond human ingenuity to employ it with complete success under such conditions. The "New Art" designers, however, do not seem to pay any heed to this. There is scarcely a natural form or effect, from the tiniest piece of down on the breast of a bird, to a gorgeous sunset; from a blade of grass to the "human face divine"; which they will not attempt to reproduce in marquetry. Instead of adopting the only proper course, and making their ideas conform to the obvious conditions of the materials in which they are to be carried out, they attempt to force those conditions to conform to their ideas. Is it necessary for me to say that to do so is utterly and absolutely indefensible? Many other instances besides marquetry might be quoted in support of my contention; but let us change our vein.

In performing the duties of a critic, nothing, I think, is more refreshing than to be able to turn from condemnation to praise—except, of course, there be something constitutionally awry with the critic. Having pointed out what in my humble opinion is the fundamental weakness of the "New Art," it is with sincere pleasure that I proceed to deal with its strength. Curiously enough, both that weakness and strength spring from practically the same source—the admiration of Nature, and the application of her lessons to the requirements of the furniture designer. But nearly all knowledge, however good it may be, and however desirable its acquisition in the first place, is capable of misapplication; and there are many most powerful forces which may be employed for evil as well as for good. As we have passed in review the artistic evil that has been wrought through

the slavish copying of Nature by this new school of French designers, let us now take a good look at the other side of the shield, which is indeed a bright one.

By returning to Nature from the fixed conventions by which their ideas had been for so long "cribbed, cabined, and confined," the founders of the "New Art" selected a field in which their individuality would have the fullest opportunity to assert itself, and such creative genius as they possessed would enjoy the advantage of comparative freedom. For long, as we have seen, they had become accustomed to the "vain repetition" of old and familiar details, whose rendering again and again simply called for the ordinary skill of the mere copyist; and, throughout this time, their own light had been, metaphorically speaking, kept completely hidden under a bushel, the density of whose weaving increased as years rolled by. On the one hand, the details which they had been content to "serve up" with such unbroken monotony were, in reality, even if none were omitted, comparatively few and easily mastered, so that it was not easy to go very far astray in dealing with them. On the other hand, what a difference existed under the new régime.

At their absolute command, and for the mere asking, they had all the illimitable wealth of Nature's ever-varying forms, every one containing a lesson of some kind or another. The whole of these, or, at least, of such as are known to us, have never been, and never will be, grasped by any one man, or, for the matter of that, by any one group of men; and who will venture to estimate what untold legions of rarely beautiful structures, never yet seen by mortal eye, or dreamed of by mortal brain, are awaiting discovery? Here was wealth of inspiration indeed; and there is small cause for wonder that what may be described as its re-discovery by men endowed with undoubted genius, and of the highest artistic attainments, led to most notable results, for which we can



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display unbounded admiration, unqualified by even the slightest suspicion of dissent.

It may be contended, of course, and with reason, that, in the first place, all styles were based on Nature, whether confessedly or not ; and that even those of Oriental origin, in which the imitation of natural forms was most rigidly prohibited by religious dictates, give indisputable evidence of their inspiration from the same source. Precisely so. But it must be remembered that the detail of all styles—which consisted in most cases of the decorative rendering of leaves, flowers, fruit, husks, berries, etc., gathered or plucked straight from the garden, field, or hedgerow—in its pristine state partook very largely of the charm and freshness of the originals. In the course of centuries that charm and freshness have been lost by reason of incessant and ignorant copying, and lifeless repetition of *copies*. They have become, in a great measure, "flat" and uninteresting ; their bloom has been sacrificed by too much handling and re-serving, as would happen to the daintiest creation of the greatest *chef* if subjected to a similar course of treatment.

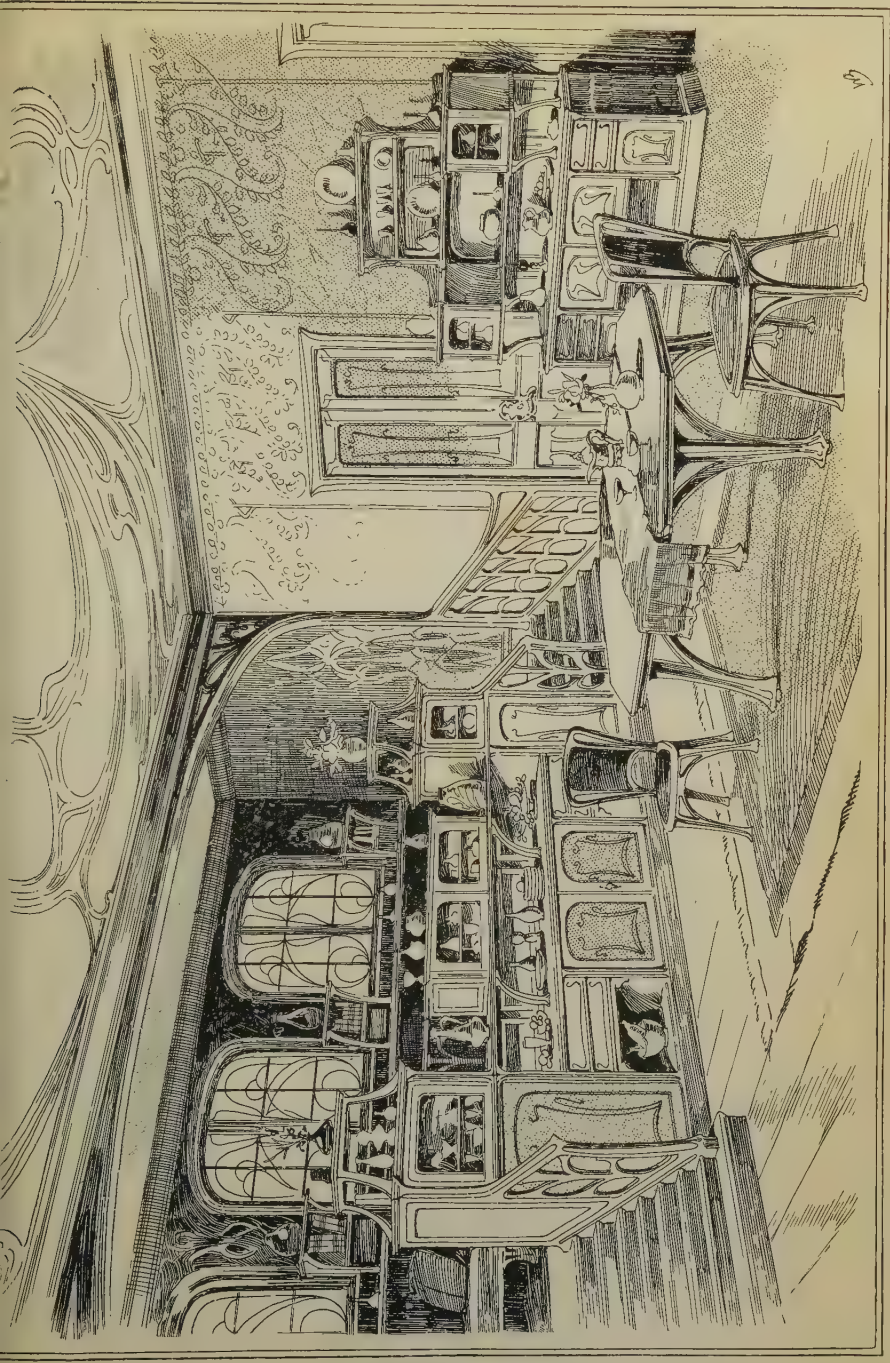
If practical demonstration of the truth of this contention be demanded, let the doubter take the first acanthus scroll conceived and drawn by the old Italian artist, in sunny Florence or Venice, who had a curling bunch of fresh-plucked bank ursine, with its spiky serrations, veining, and elusive twists and turns before him, and compare it with the carefully stippled drawing or plaster study of precisely the same detail but taken "from the cast" by the art school "National Medallists" of to-day. Are they the same? The Medallist undoubtedly does the very best he is able to do according to the prevailing system of study ; and let me say most emphatically that it is the system, and not the student, which is to be blamed. So it must always be, unless the artist goes straight to the fountain-head instead of being content to receive his supply of inspiration through old,

circuitous, and worn-out conduits which could not do otherwise than become fouled and contaminated by the foreign accumulations of ages. We find the same fact illustrated everywhere. The sphinxes of the old Egyptians ; the anthemion of the Greeks ; the bold wreaths and foliations of the Romans ; and the crisp and sparkling leafage of the Gothic—to quote but a few typical examples—were instinct with life and beauty when inspired direct by Nature ; but, when reproduced, their true origin is, more often than not, lost sight of, and, as an inevitable consequence, much of their beauty has departed.

The foregoing is, I think, as complete and impartial a summing-up of the "New Art" as need be given here. On account of considerations of space, I wish that it might have been expressed more briefly, but the movement in itself is one of very great importance and far-reaching influence—notwithstanding the fact that some writers who have not studied it, nor appreciated it, as it should be studied and appreciated, are disposed to treat the whole as an evanescent "craze"—and it would be altogether unwarrantable for us to dismiss it with inadequate notice.

But it is now time to turn from mere theoretical generalisation to actual demonstration, and take a glance at as many actual examples of this "New Art" work as may fitly be included between the covers of such a book as this. In selecting types for illustration, my aim has been to obtain them from genuine and unimpeachable sources, so that no question as to their authenticity might be raised ; and also to present only such as can be regarded as representative, in every respect.

In the writing-table, Fig. 3, Plate I., we have a constructive form which, in every particular, suggests natural growth ; yet, except in matters of minor detail, there is no attempt in this to copy nature exactly. The same remark applies to Fig. 2, and in a lesser degree to Figs. 1 and 4. The under



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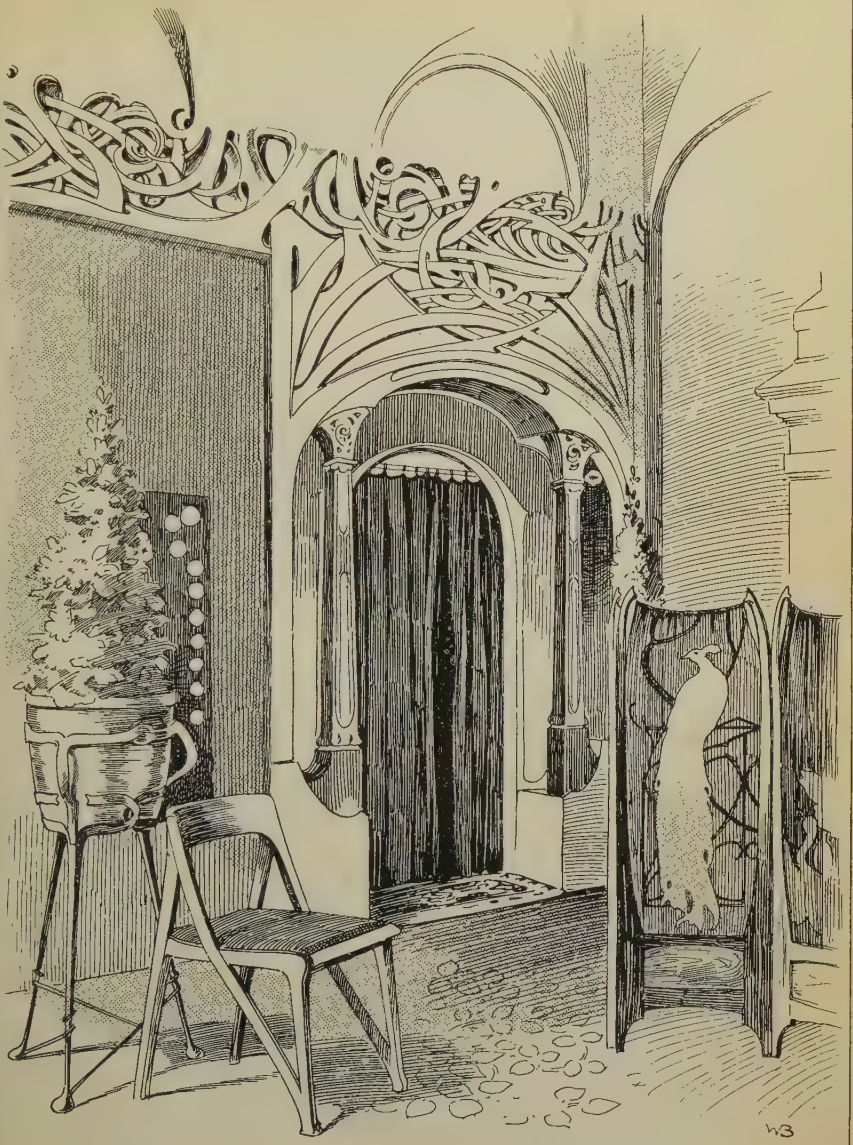
supports—they can scarcely be called legs—of the two first named certainly bring to mind the tree trunk, but it is the tree trunk *adapted* to a specific purpose, and not as found in its natural state in the woodland or forest glade. In connection with these plates I must explain that it is quite impossible to convey a completely correct impression of any of the pieces by means of mere black-and-white sketches ; the originals must be seen in all the richness of the choicest mahogany, relieved by leaves, blossoms, and tendrils, exquisitely modelled and chased in fine brass, which is finished dull, and polished only here and there so as to give the necessary "high lights." Their effect may then be properly appreciated. I do not consider that they are altogether graceful ; but the conception and execution of every one are characterised by a spontaneity and vigour which convey, with irresistible force, the impression that the artists and craftsmen responsible for them took a veritable delight in their execution. Every part is instinct with "life," the presence of which goes far to reconcile us to the licence in which the designers have indulged. Moreover, so far as construction is concerned, no one could reasonably raise any objection to them on the score of stability or soundness. Exception may, however, be taken to the enrichment of the back of the upper recess in the wardrobe (Fig. 4) by the introduction of most elaborate and costly inlay, which should never have been there, as it cannot be seen to advantage in such a situation, particularly if the recess be used for the storage of anything bulky.

The bedstead depicted in Fig. 1 is far more graceful in form than its companions on the same plate ; and it gives us, at the same time, a demonstration of the French marquetry-cutter's skill, which, with its pleasing design, based on a rare orchid, and all its wealth of choice and subtle colouring, is fascinating in the extreme. The design of the inlay, moreover, has clearly been specially planned to "fill"

to the fullest advantage the spaces which it was destined to occupy. . I make a point of this, for such is not by any means always the case with "New Art" inlay, whose design very often bears no relation whatsoever to its surroundings. Further examples are presented on Plate II., the arm-chair and small circular table on which (Figs. 5 and 7) again convey the idea of growth. All the studies I have referred to are from designs by the brothers Majorelle, who, I need hardly say, were among the pioneers, and rank with the leaders, of the "New Art" movement in France.

A "New Art" Chair (German)

In the small chair, Fig. 1, Plate II., there is strong indication that the designer from whose pencil it comes is either unable, or has not the inclination, to forsake the "Louis-Quinze" altogether, so he has introduced a familiar form; but, instead of falling back upon the usual hackneyed scrolls and coquillage for his enrichment, he has dressed up the "Louis-Quinze" frame with "New Art" tendrils and leaves, and with no small success. While writing of this chair, I may mention that the furniture manufacturers of this new school are not content to cut-into "lengths" of ordinary woven or printed patterns in order to provide their seat and chair coverings,



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but they make a great point of having special designs prepared for them, to accord exactly with those of the article upon which they are to find a place, and to fit perfectly the shapes of the portions to be covered. That is altogether as it should be, and I wish that the same plan were more generally adopted. The consequent outlay is not very great, while the effect of chairs and similar articles so treated is vastly enhanced.

A "NEW ART" CHAIR (GERMAN)

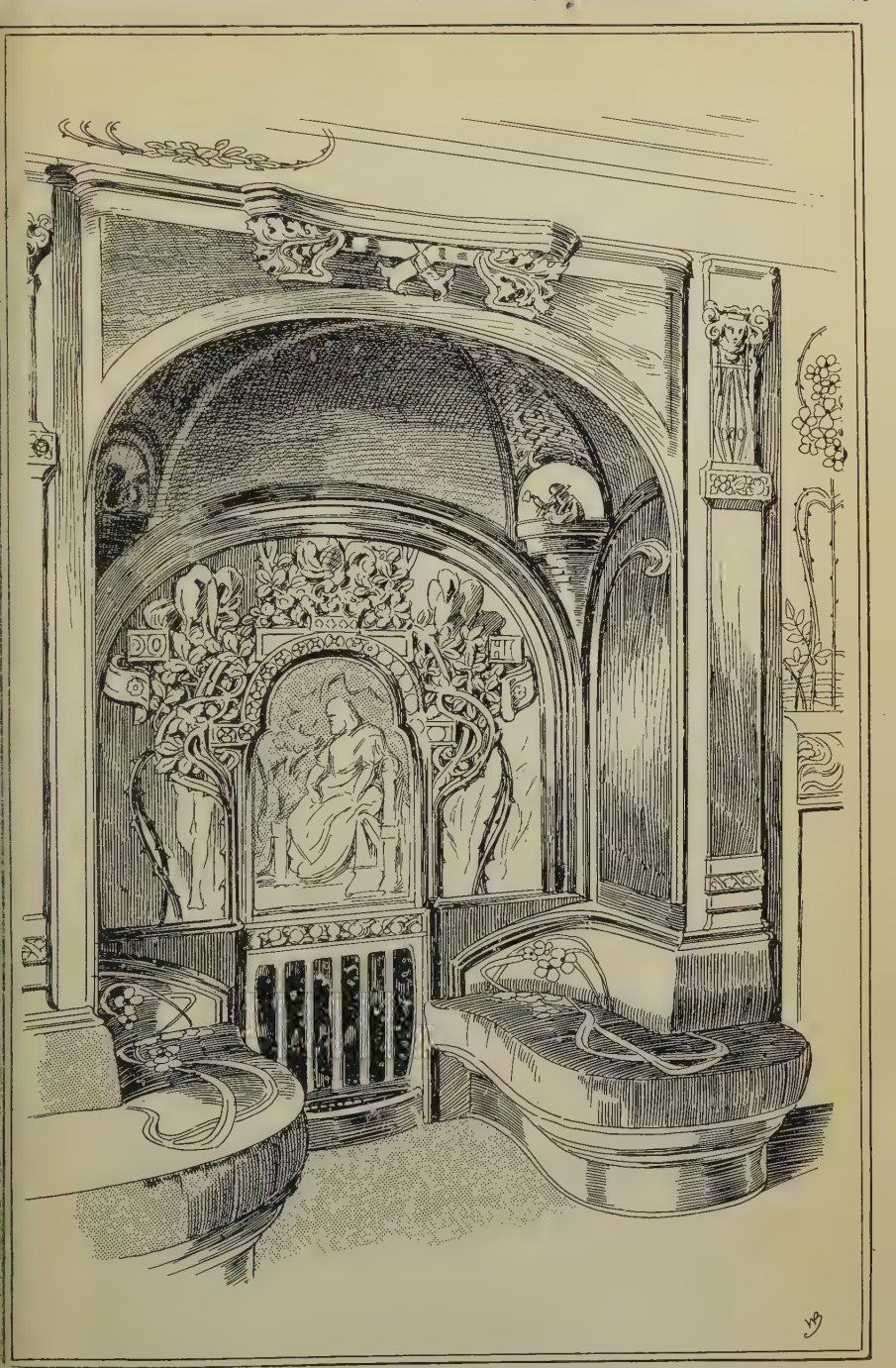
Quasi-naturalesque enrichment predominates again in Figs. 2 and 4, Plate II., though the forms of the two pieces are comparatively commonplace; and we have it yet once more, but displaying greater taste in conception and skill in arrangement, in the remaining illustration on the same plate—an exceptional and altogether admirable piece of work. As an illustration of the lengths to which the "New Art" designers and craftsmen are prepared to go in the direction of overcoming technical difficulties in order to attain the object upon which they have set their mind, the unquestionably original mantel, by M. Charles Plumet, shown on Plate III., is remarkably striking. The underlying idea is, obviously,

that the lines of the rich red mahogany woodwork should convey the impression of tongues of flame curling up to, and licking, the ceiling. This fancy may not, perhaps, be regarded by many as a very comfortable one, as it irresistibly brings to mind the question of fire insurance premiums ; but it is, nevertheless, quite characteristic of the "New Art," and I must admit that, in my opinion, this mantel is endowed with a peculiar and most decided charm.

A number of examples are given on Plate IV. to assist in rendering more clear my remarks regarding the character of the inlay which is so freely employed by the chair makers and cabinet makers of this particular school. It will be apparent that, in most instances, no effort was put forth to render this inlay decorative—employing the word in its strictest sense—or to so arrange the detail that it should have the appearance of having been specially designed to fit the spaces apportioned to it. The panels as they stand are simply naturalesque studies—pictures in wood, to all intents and purposes, which would look equally well, if not better, framed-up independently and hung on a wall.

By way of contrast to the foregoing I have introduced, on Plate V., a scheme of interior woodwork by the Union Centrale des Arts Decoratifs, of Paris, in which naturalesque detail is very extensively employed, but is subordinated throughout to structural conditions, and characterised by a sense of fitness which makes it not a little pleasing, at least that is my view.

By an examination of Plate VI. a fairly adequate conception may be gained of the general impression conveyed by a dining-room fitted and furnished in accordance with one of the predominant phases of the French "New Art," though the rare charm of the colouring of the original cannot be given here. Let the reader imagine the warm tones of mahogany illumined by the rays of the sun gleaming through stained glass graduated from pale yellow,



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through orange and deep saffron, to almost a blood red; then the illustration will possess fuller meaning.

The next study, illustrated on this page, having nothing at all to do with furniture, ought not really to be here; but I could not resist the temptation to introduce it, as it furnishes yet another striking proof of the rare ingenuity

Decorative Peacock Scheme, executed in Iron Piping

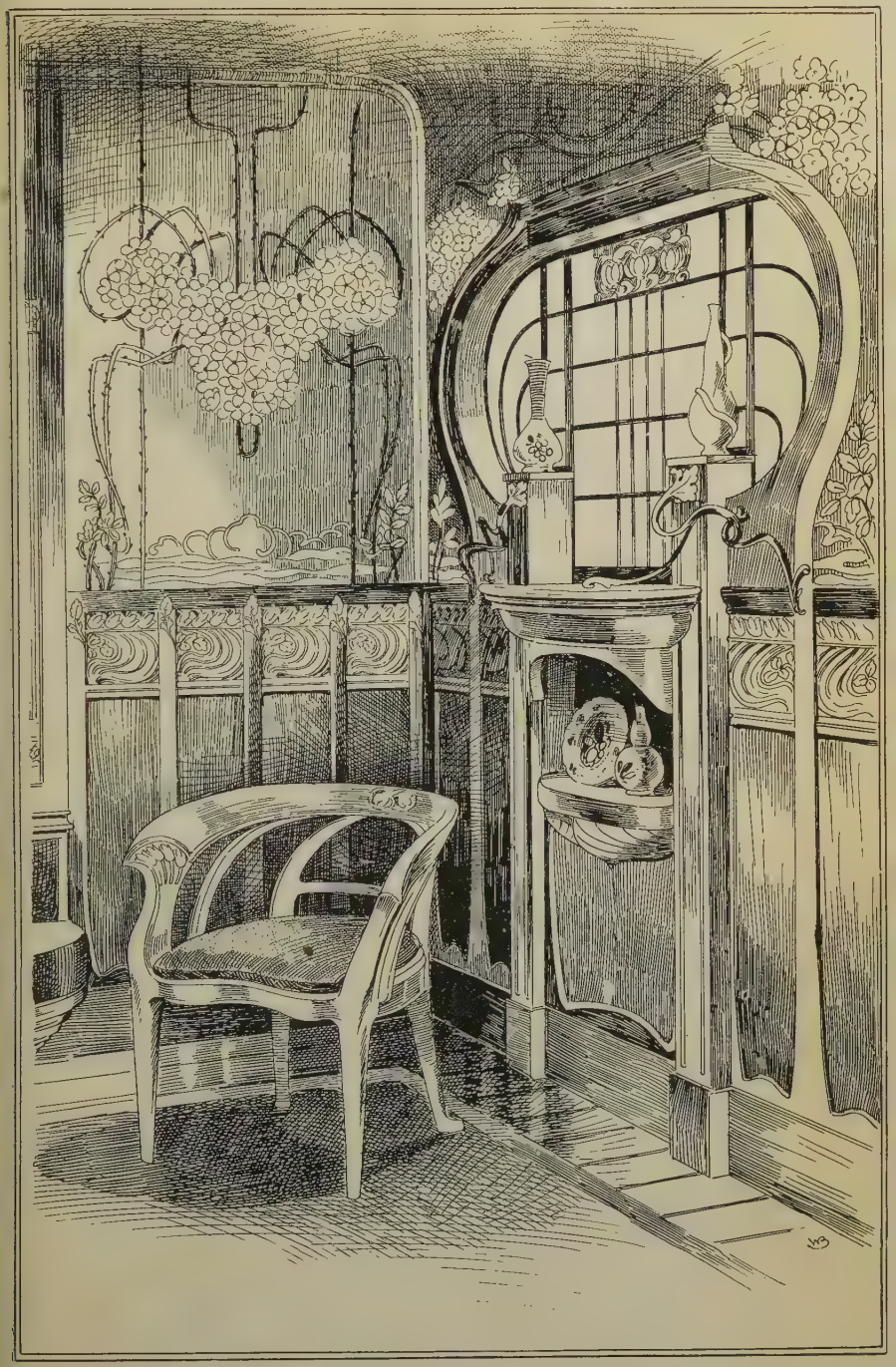
with which these Frenchmen will press all manner of seemingly unlikely materials into their service in order to secure the effects they desire. The sketch represents one end of a galvanised iron building erected in the grounds of the last Paris Exhibition, and the design, which is certainly not unpleasing, is, I need not point out, based on the

peacock—a *motif* favoured by decorative artists of all ages. So far so good. But in what material was this design rendered? In nothing more nor less than *iron gas pipes!*

As I have already indicated, the "New-Art" designer cannot always entirely forget his old loves, and in the settee which appears on the next page we have another "Louis-Quinze" frame in a naturalesque, or "New-Art," dress. This piece, in most of its detail, recalls strongly much of the so-called "rustic" furniture usually relegated to lawns, "back gardens," and summer houses. Designed, as it is here, for the adornment of the *salon* or drawing-room, it appears resplendent in all the iridescent glories of yellow, green and blue bronzes, the effect of which is, to say the least, certainly unique. The next illustration, which appears on p. 310, represents a seat which, on the authority of one of the leading houses in Paris, is in "L'Art Nouveau"; but let it speak for itself.

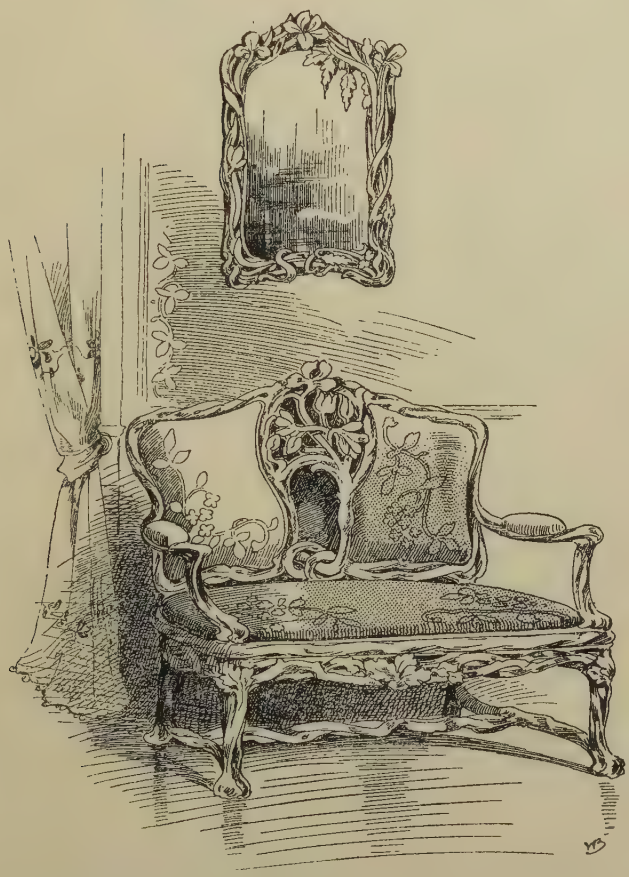
Of less unusual modern productions which the French include under the heading "L'Art Nouveau," I might illustrate many, but they would be simply adaptations, if not actual copies, of English "Quaint" designs such as I have dealt with in another chapter; for the French, in their anxiety to get away from their own time-honoured modes, have cast more than a passing glance at the work of the British designer, and have not hesitated to take many a leaf out of his book. We surely can offer no objection to their doing so, when we call to mind what we owe to them for inspiration afforded in the past.

There remains one more feature of this "New Art" upon which I must touch before leaving the subject; the innovations brought about in the matter of colouring. In this as in other directions long-accepted notions have been utterly upset, and colours which it was once generally supposed could never possibly be made to harmonise are now brought into juxtaposition with a result altogether charming.



REFERENCE IN TEXT. See pages 310, 311

Yellows, greens, pinks, mauves, magentas, and other colours quite impossible to describe, but the very mention of which



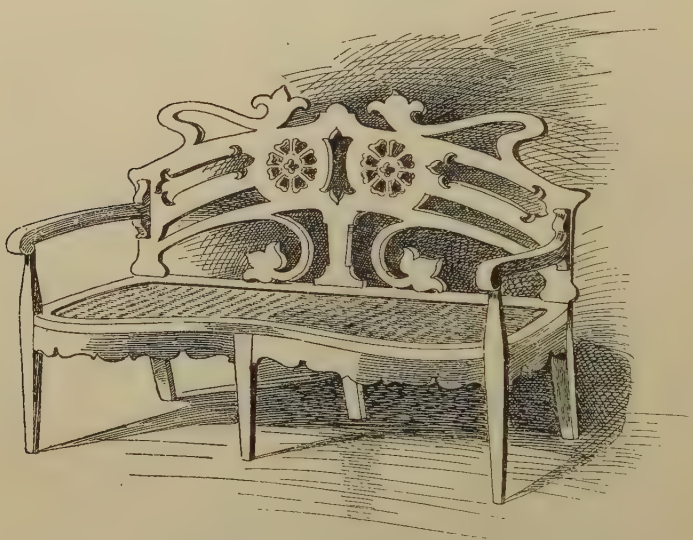
"NEW ART" DETAIL ON A "LOUIS-QUINZE" FORM (FRENCH)

(*See page* 308 *for reference*)

in combination almost takes the breath away, are employed together in such subtle gradations and shades, and in so skilful

a manner, that we involuntarily exclaim: "Why were these delightful schemes never thought of before?"—for delightful many of them are without a doubt.

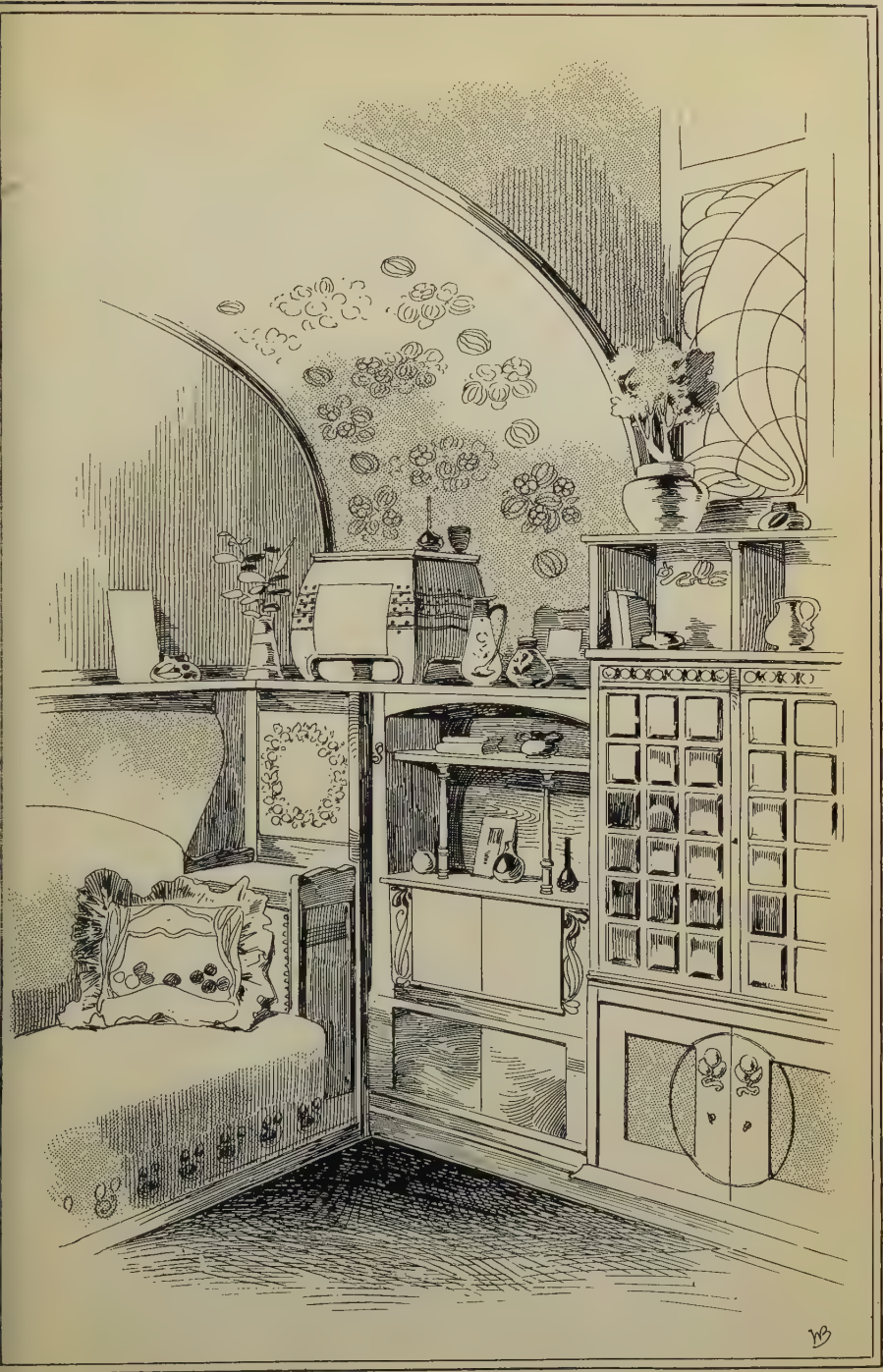
It is not possible for me to deal at any length with the development of the movement in continental countries other than France, but it will not do, nevertheless, to ignore altogether what is taking place in Germany and Austria in this



A "New Art" Atrocity (French)

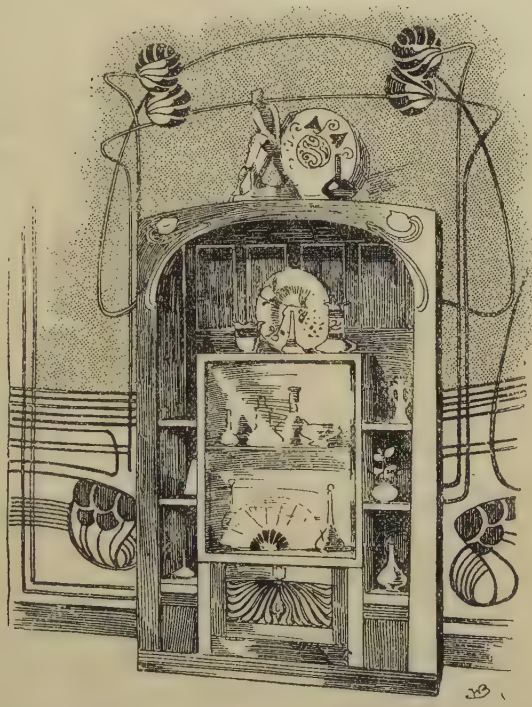
(*See page* 308 *for reference*)

connection. On Plates VII. to X., therefore, appear schemes, hailing from both countries, which may be regarded as fairly characteristic. In Germany, quite a number of the leaders of the new school—the "*Moderne Stil*" as it is called—are cultivating a "stringy," interlaced, entangled class of "ornament," such as that indicated on Plate VII., and by the sketch on next page; but a greater degree of refinement and



Reference in Text. See pages 310, 311

restraint is displayed in schemes of the character that pervades Plate VIII. As for the two Austrian studies, that on Plate IX. has rather the attenuated "stringy" failing again; but the corner on Plate X. is as simple and unpretentious as



"New Art" Surface Decoration of the "Wiry" Type (German)

(*See page* 310 *for reference*)

one could well desire, and, save for one or two scraps of "New Art" enrichment here and there, might be a rendering of our own 'Quaint."

But I must not be tempted to discuss the "New Art"

further, save to recognise again the greatness of the work which the apostles of the cult have accomplished. Notwithstanding the many extravagances and absurdities with which they are to be credited, they have induced decorative artists the world over to think more for themselves, and rely less on their knowledge of traditional "styles." In fact they have persuaded them to use *their own* brains instead of perpetually copying, adapting, and re-rendering the results of the brain-work of others. The total gain of all this, in the long run, must be altogether incalculable ; so cannot we afford to forget the follies, great as they are, by which its inception has been attended ?

# THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

## (PRIOR TO, AND EARLY, "VICTORIAN")

HAVING fresh in our memory the standard attained by the British furnisher and decorator during the reign of the Georges, it is difficult to write in terms of moderation of English furniture as it was during the latter part of the first half of the nineteenth century—the early Victorian period—if the subject is to be discussed purely from the artistic point of view; and it is that aspect of the question which must now be kept before us. Comparisons are notoriously odious; but in many circumstances they are not altogether to be evaded; and as it is one of the chief objects of this book to indulge in them, we must be prepared to put up with the consequences, whatever they may chance to be. At the present stage of our studies, those that must be instituted will not prove in any degree comforting.

The preceding century, as we have seen, had been by far the brightest and most notable in the history of the house-furnishing industries of this country. At its close, the tasteful, and, in not a few instances, beautiful creations of the "Heppelwhite" and "Sheraton" schools were at the height of their popularity, which they retained far into the reign of George the Fourth, and even later. Before the nineteenth century was out of its infancy, however, the personal influence of the founders of those styles was removed; and to improve upon their work, or even merely to perpetuate such traditions as had been created by them, was a task the fulfilment of which required the presence of a man, or men, of similar calibre. Refinement reigned

supreme in the homes of the upper and middle classes; and it might reasonably have been imagined, as doubtless many did imagine and hope, that crudity and ugliness had been banished from them for ever, and that good taste had at last taken up its abode in our midst. But was it so?

Furniture designers *of a sort* were, of course, not wanting, and while such as there were remained content to follow in the footsteps of their great forerunners all went well. Unfortunately, as we shall see, they, in their turn, became tired of prevailing styles, and on the part of the public the old Athenian cry for "some new thing" once more broke forth, and had to be answered. (I have advisedly used the word "unfortunately," as will presently be seen.) That discontent with the slavish and persistent following of old familiar lines, and the consequent desire to improve upon them, are in any respect to be condemned I should be the very last to suggest; but when those who undertake the task of improvement are quite incapable of successfully carrying it through, nothing but disaster can ensue; and, under such conditions, it is far better to let well alone. This was the state of affairs at the time of which I am now writing.

With Heppelwhite gone, Sheraton was practically the last of the "Old Guard" left to aid in sustaining the traditions which he had done so much to create; but the task that now devolved upon him was far too heavy for the poor old master in his declining years. His brain was failing; his hand had quite lost its cunning; and he himself, even, commenced to perpetrate absurdities, and produce designs which he would certainly never have dreamed of countenancing in his earlier days, and when in possession of all his faculties.

A crying and imperative need, then, existed for a worthy successor to these highly-gifted designers and craftsmen, but we may look for him in vain throughout the earlier years of the nineteenth century. The man was not forthcoming, and pigmies had stepped into the places that had

been the vantage points, not so many years before, of veritable giants. What then occurred?

With our English versions of the "Louis-Quinze" and "Louis-Seize" before them, these designers deemed it desirable to make a change of some kind; at the same time, they were afraid to draw upon their own store of originality in order to bring the desired change about. If the truth must be told, so far as originality went the fund they did happen to possess was so infinitesimally small as to be practically non-existent. Whether they recognised that fact or not I am unable to say, but certain it is that they came to the conclusion that it would be as well for them to do as their predecessors had done, and continue to draw upon the French for inspiration, particularly as the "French" was still notably in favour in this country. But they failed to appreciate the fact that there is an art even in successful adaptation; an art, moreover, which it is not given to every one to master. Still, to France they went boldly for their ideas.

Many changes had taken place in that country too. There, also, the spirit of unrest had been actively at work; the "Louis-Seize" in politics and the "Louis-Seize" in art were already regarded as things of the past, and everything calculated to bring them back to mind was relegated, so far as possible, to the limbo of forgotten things. The chaste elegance by which the Monarchy had been surrounded until the very last, with its multitudinous suggestions of pastoral delights and amorous dalliance, was banished from the court, where, once again, emblems of military glory were furbished up by the French designer to win the approbation of the new ruler.

To the "Empire," therefore, the designers and manufacturers of English cabinet work of this epoch turned for inspiration, and in doing so they came sadly to grief. It is not at all necessary for me to recapitulate the leading characteristics of the "Empire," for to do so would occupy

too great space, on the one hand, and, on the other, they are to be found fully set out in the chapter devoted to the consideration of the work of that period. Bearing in mind what he has recently studied on that subject, the reader will naturally wonder why it was that the English rendering was such a complete failure when the parent style was far from being so. There are several reasons to account for this, and I may explain briefly why so little success attended the efforts put forth by our own designers to transplant the "Empire" into British soil at the time of which I am writing. In the first place, the conditions prevailing in each country were essentially different. France was rendered almost mad with triumph by the many conquests added to her scroll of fame under the leadership of "The Little Corporal"; her children had little mind for anything beside military glory. It followed, as a matter of course, that the existence of such a condition of affairs should, in some measure at least, be indicated by the tastes of the people, and revealed in the character of the decoration and furniture with which they elected to surround themselves; and so it was, as we have seen.

But when the effort was made to inspire another nation, living under totally different conditions, and possessing a totally different temperament, with enthusiasm for the same symbols, forms, and fancies, the task became impossible of execution. Much that was pregnant with meaning to the subjects of Napoleon, who rejoiced in the overthrow of one monarchy and the setting up of another, appealed but slightly to their neighbours on this side of the Channel, who were not by any manner of means in a similar mood, and had no desire to be. A determined attempt was organised, nevertheless, to force the "Empire" down their throats, whether they wanted it or not; and, as the attempt was clumsily made, the result was that the erstwhile beauty of the English home, which it had taken so many years to bring

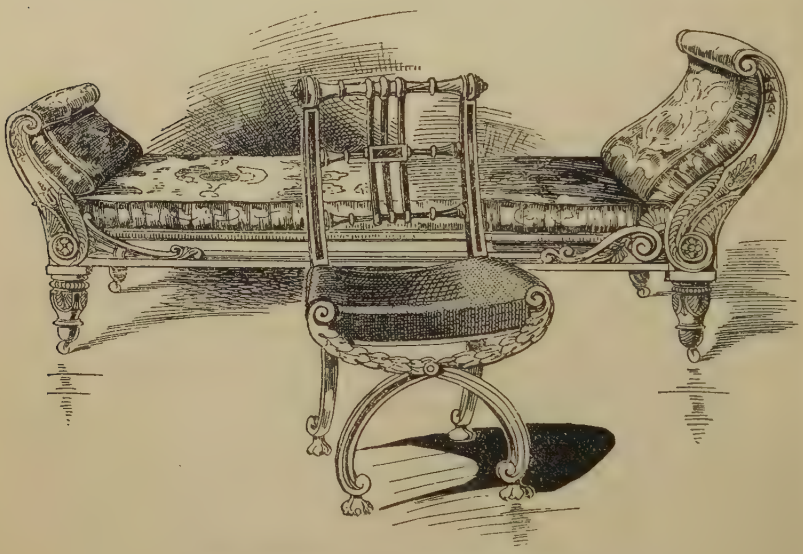
to the rare state of perfection that it had attained, suffered terribly ; indeed, it almost disappeared altogether for a time.

It seems most curious, withal, and notwithstanding the reason advanced above, that our designers could not extract something better from the "Empire" than they did ; the style itself, whatever else may be said about it, was refined, stately, and dignified in the extreme. That its imitation here should lead to such fearfully hopeless ugliness, seems to indicate that there was something radically wrong with the imitators. It must be admitted, however, that they had a very difficult task to perform ; indeed, they endeavoured to accomplish the impossible, and naturally failed.

The English cabinet maker attempted to ape the magnificence of the "Empire" without the opportunities, or the means requisite, to enable him to do so successfully. He set himself to reproduce as nearly as possible, and in a form which would be within the means of the average householder, models designed and made for the palaces of an emperor, and into the production of which the question of cost had probably never entered. The elaborate carving, the chimerical figures, the delicate brush-work, and above all the *ormolu* mounts—all features which were part and parcel of the original style, and without which it was no style at all—were far too costly for employment in the conditions under which the British furnisher had to work. In the great mass of his productions any dependence upon the aid of such accessories could not for one moment be entertained, and even elaborate shaping of the woodwork itself was seldom permissible, by reason of cost. The early Victorian designer was not to be daunted, however ; so he went to work to find a substitute for all these characteristic elements which were forbidden him. He finally decided to atone for their absence by increasing the wood, determining that, if his creations could not impose respect by the weight of their magnificence, they should, at least, do so by that of their timber. That is the

story in a nutshell, and it is a painful one. True, the "English Empire" was relieved by some redeeming features, and was productive of a few graceful forms, particularly in chair work; but they constituted somewhat rare exceptions to the dreadful and all-pervading rule.

However, though it was essential to sketch this phase of



TWO STUDIES IN "SHERATON-EMPIRE"

(*See page* 319 *for reference*)

English furnishing, there is not the least occasion to dwell upon it, for the vast majority of the examples of the work of that period are not endowed with the slightest suggestion of artistic merit; are of no value to collectors; and can serve only to remind us of the depths to which we sank in the matter of applied art during the earlier part of the reign of Victoria; depths which were proudly "sounded," for the benefit of the world, at the memorable exhibition of 1851.

REFERENCE IN TEXT. See page 319

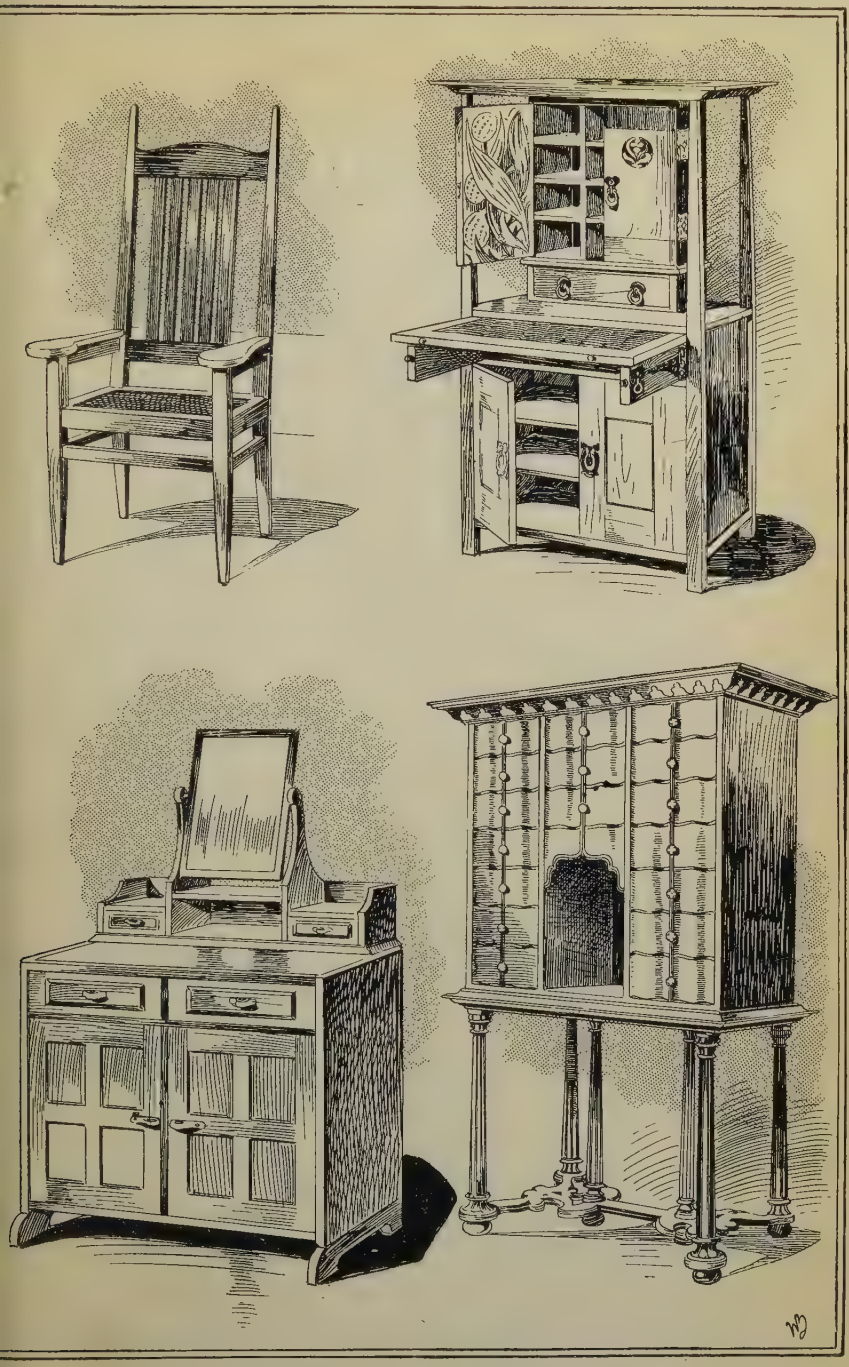
If any reader should desire to study the furniture of that period more closely than he will be able to do here, he cannot do better than refer to the special volumes issued by the *Art Journal* at that time, which are to be found in most reference-libraries, and illustrate the glories (!) of that exhibition. I have also, in the chapter on "Other Georgeian Types," given the names of several other illustrated works dealing extensively with English furniture and decoration of that "dark age." I much prefer that the examples should be found there than in these pages. Tasteful furniture was, of course, not altogether unknown to our forefathers of the days of which I am now writing; but such as then existed was on the lines laid down by Chippendale, Heppelwhite, Sheraton, and even earlier masters, or else consisted of such English renderings of the "Empire" as were more refined than the majority of those interpretations. So matters went on for many a long year without any very great effort being made to improve them.

It is necessary, I suppose, to illustrate some examples of the style of this period, so on the single plate included in this melancholy chapter, and on the preceding page, I present a few studies of English "Empire" at its best. That they are possessed of some little merit may be accounted for by the fact that they came from the pencil of Sheraton; but as they were designed in the declining years of that old master, and in answer to a demand which, I venture to think, was by no means in accord with his own personal preferences, they have not been included in our deliberations upon his representative work. The two sofas are not ungraceful in line, and the arm-chair is a sensible and comfortable model which has done good service for many years; but the two remaining chairs have an appearance of weakness that is far from being in keeping with true "Sheraton." The table illustrated is not, of course, on "Empire" lines, but is suggestive rather of the Gothic, and—well—it might be worse.

# "QUAINT" FURNITURE

FOLLOWING the condition of affairs referred to in the preceding chapter, it was not until well into the second half of the last century that any signs appeared of a revival as regards tastefulness in the furnishing of the homes of this country—that is to say so far as the origination of new ideas was concerned. Until they became apparent, those purchasers who would not tolerate the heavy and ungainly caricatures of the "Empire" which the furnisher offered them had to fall back upon the traditions of the preceding century, and they could hardly have done better. It does not form any part of my scheme to review exhaustively the work of the past fifty years; not that the work is unworthy of consideration, by any manner of means; but it is of too recent a date to be accorded any great amount of space in a book the chief object of which is to deal with historic styles in furniture. Moreover, for the reader to see the best of everything that has been done by the modern designer to supply the needs of the average householder, it is only necessary to make a tour of inspection round the principal establishments devoted to the fitting-up of the home. There a complete and most exhaustive object lesson in this phase of the subject may be found. Nor does it come within the scope of this volume to proffer advice upon the choice of modern furniture—I hope to deal with that separately; but a few observations which may aid in accounting for the why and wherefore of the styles prevalent at the present day will not, I am sure, be regarded as out of place in these pages.

When passing in review the selection of productions



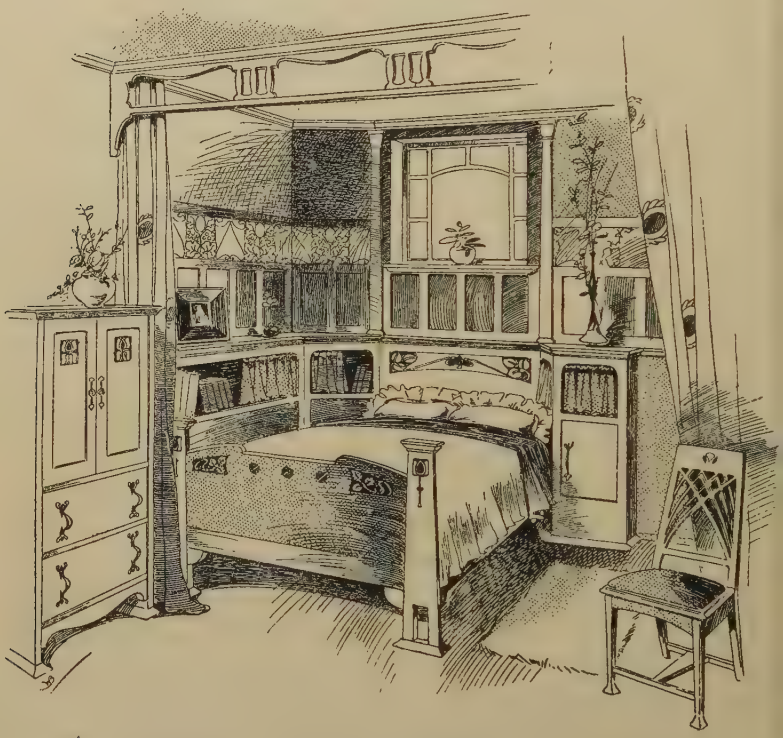
REFERENCE IN TEXT. See pages 327, 328

shown by any furnishing establishment of repute at the commencement of the twentieth century, the careful and well-informed observer will easily classify them in his own mind under three heads. First:—there are those that are either absolute copies of, or the designs of which are based upon, historic models which we have already considered. Second:—there are those that have obviously been made merely to serve certain utilitarian purposes—goods in whose production economy of time, labour, and material has been the only really serious consideration; the manufacturer entertaining the idea that, so long as he provided what would look "a lot for the money," style, as such, was a matter of little or no importance. Third:—tasteful creations which are certainly refined, and often beautiful, but which cannot be classified with any of the styles with which we have dealt in the foregoing pages; and it is of these last-named that I must have something to say.

During the past twenty or thirty years, and particularly during the last decade, certain designers and manufacturers have cultivated form and decoration of a notably simple, and often severe, type, and—fortunately for all concerned—these have steadily increased in favour in the eyes of purchasers of the more intelligent class, until they have become quite "the fashion." When these first commenced to make their appearance, some difficulty was experienced in finding a name for them, and they were variously described as being in the "Liberty," the "Morris," or the "Arts-and-Crafts" style; but later those titles were abandoned—or nearly so—one by one, and some inventive mind hit upon "The Quaint Style" as a more fitting substitute. As that description seemed to take the popular fancy, it has come into current use.

In the furniture trade itself, other names are often used to describe such goods—the names of wholesale manufacturers who have assiduously cultivated this particular style, and who have, as a matter of fact, done quite as much as, or even

more than, the famous cabinet makers of past centuries to elevate their craft. So materially, however, have conditions changed that, were I to publish those names here, I should bring down upon my humble head the maledictions of all



A Scheme of "Quaint" Furnishing (by W. Baldock)

(*See page 328 for reference*)

the large retail furnishing firms, while the manufacturers themselves would be writing apologetic letters to these firms protesting that it had been done without their knowledge or permission, and trusting that the error, serious as it was, might not interfere with the continuance of custom.

Such is the state of affairs at the present time, and my reference to it brings me to the question of a movement which was organised to revolutionise, if possible, the position of the artist and craftsman as regards their relationship to the

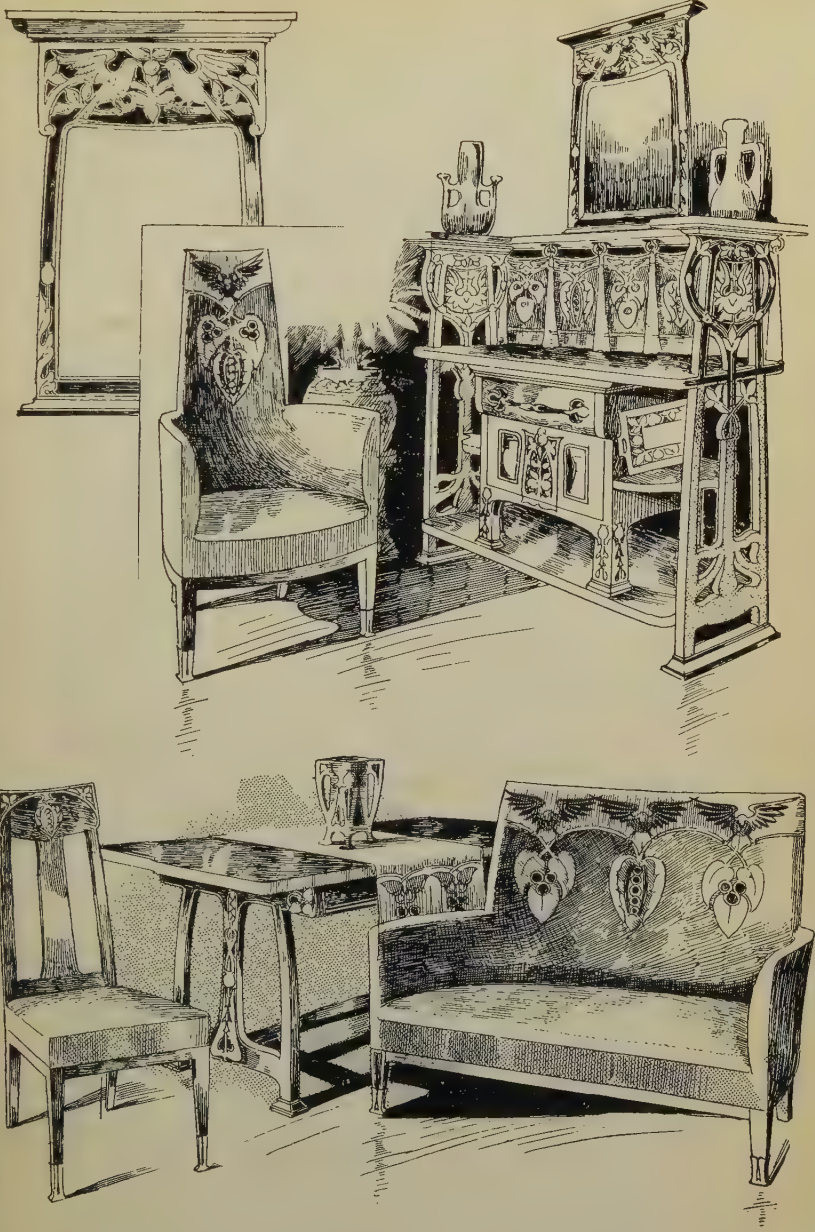
A Scheme of "Quaint" Furnishing (by W. Baldock)

(*See page 328 for reference*)

public ; and which also was, in a great measure, responsible for the inception of that style which we may consider under its generally accepted title, "The Quaint."

To treat at length upon the tenets of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society ; to set forth their propaganda ; to follow

the growth of the organisation; to tell of the unstinted admiration entertained by its members for the life-work of William Morris; and to write the life-story of "The Master" himself, is far too colossal a task to be entered upon here. All that I can do is to sum up, as concisely and yet as fully as lies within my power, the cardinal points of the creed subscribed to by this little band of workers who have come so greatly into prominence of late years. They may, I think, be stated as follows:—That the labourer is worthy of his hire. That the artist and craftsman, who create and produce beautiful things, have as much right to be known to the public as the middleman, who, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, could not produce a beautiful thing if he tried, and has no desire to. That both artist and craftsman should be in a position to work under such conditions that they may find actual pleasure in the labour of their heads and hands. That the public should be educated in such a way as to enable it to distinguish between the good and the bad in art and craftsmanship, and so be induced to encourage the one and reject the other. These, so far as I understand them, are the main teachings of the Society, but prevailing conditions always have been, and still are, too strong for them. What are those conditions? The labourer is compelled to fight for his hire, and not infrequently starves in the struggle to obtain it. If the artist and craftsman make any attempt to bring their names before the public, they do so at their own risk, knowing that it may spell financial ruin to them—the majority of the middlemen see to that. In the great mass of their work, the artist and craftsman are too much engaged in getting it through at a "cutting price" to find pleasure in it—disgust is nearer the mark. Most members of the public prefer to buy the cheap, showy—and nasty, to the cheap, simple—and good. This is a clear statement of the case, and one to which I think, alas, no objection can fairly be taken.



REFERENCE IN TEXT. See pages 327, 328

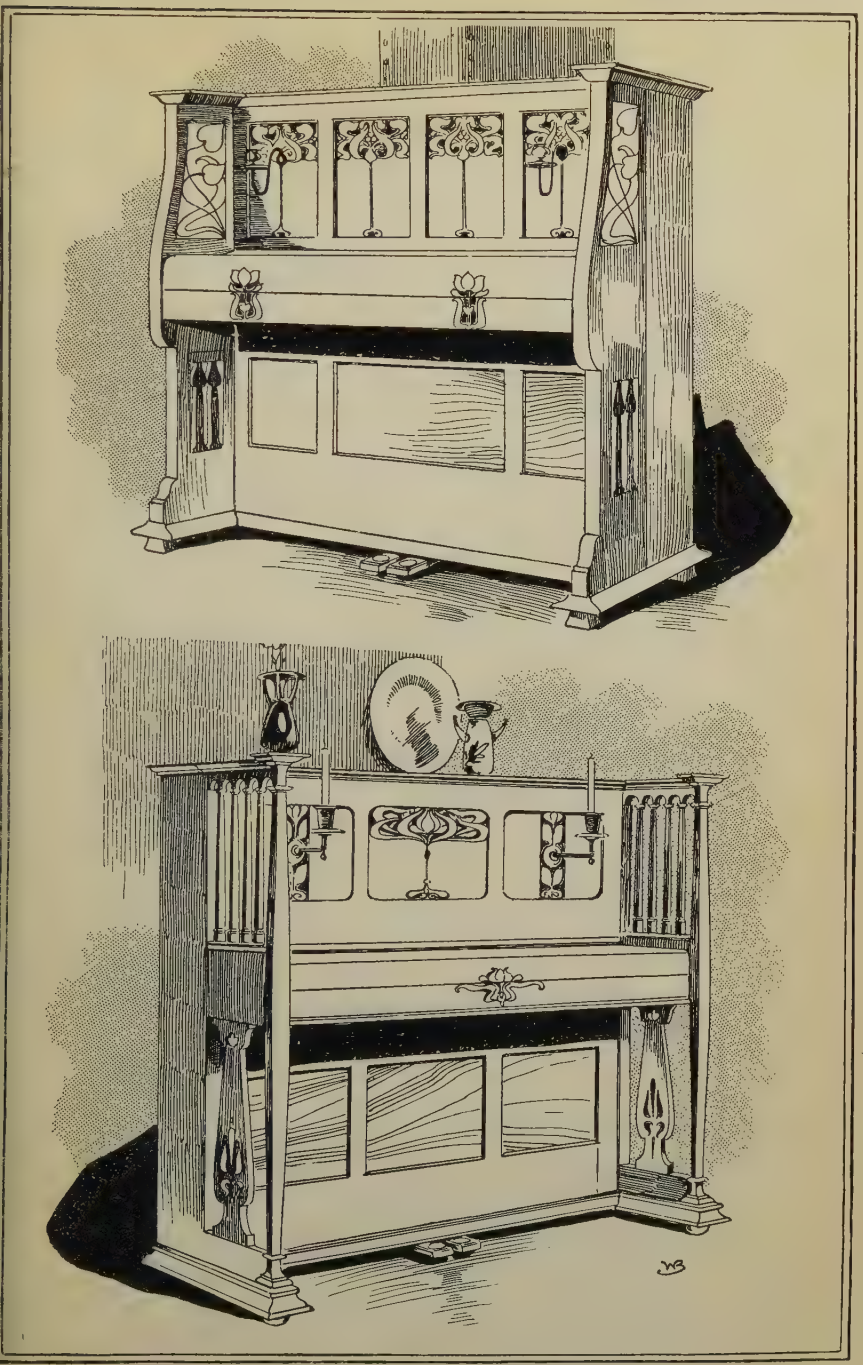
Notwithstanding the fact that the task which they set themselves seemed, and still seems, to be a hopeless one, the Society have gone bravely on ; have perpetrated many absurdities—as we all do at one time or another—and have accomplished an incalculable amount of good. And it is for us to see now in what respect they have exercised an influence upon British furniture. Most of these artists, though from the first they assumed an affectation which would have been mirth-inspiring had it not been painful ; and though, in many cases, their views regarding art are of the narrowest ; were, and are, men of high attainments ; their views, therefore, are entitled to respect. In considering what should be done to bring about the reformation of furniture, they took, in the first place, one important stand. They determined to emphasise the fact that the cabinet maker, in common with everybody else, should "cut his coat according to his cloth," and, at the same time, they endeavoured to impress this lesson upon the minds of the public. They argued, and, of course, correctly, that the majority of people cannot afford to spend very much money on their furniture ; and endeavoured to teach them that they should be content with comparative simplicity, since elaborate forms, if well made, with carving, inlay, painting, and metal enrichments, if good, are more or less costly. It was their aim to persuade the purchaser, who is able only to spend a few hundreds on the furnishing of his home, not to ape the schemes of those who may be in the position to spend thousands. And, in order to demonstrate their meaning more fully, they set about the production of types of furniture which should serve as models of what ought to be. These were placed on view at the periodical exhibitions held at the New Gallery under the auspices of the Society ; the exhibitions themselves soon became almost as popular as the annual displays of the "R.A." ; they were visited extensively by the "upper ten," who were struck by the novelty they found there ; so, before long, everything *à la* "Arts and

Crafts" became the craze. In this way the ball was set rolling.

But what of the types referred to themselves? I have said that they were brought forward as a practical protest against the cheap and nasty over-elaboration that had for so long been rampant, and of which we still see far too much; and, naturally perhaps, they went to the other extreme. The ideas which underlay them were indisputably admirable, but in too many instances they were carried into effect by men who, skilled as they were in other departments of art, had not taken the trouble to master even the A B C of furniture design or manufacture. As an inevitable result, they were endowed with much of the comic element. This furniture was made by primitive methods of construction, and was accordingly costly; in some cases it was so badly put together that it came to pieces in the Gallery. Yet, with all this, the *idea* was there, and was destined to bear remarkably rich fruit.

The professional furniture designer, and the manufacturer—in fact, the much-abused "trade"—saw that the Arts and Crafts Exhibitions had done much towards the creation of a genuine demand for simple and quaint furniture; so they—who were trained to the business—set to work in that direction, and, with the aid of all the most modern, and most perfect, facilities and manufacturing appliances that money can command, produced their own designs upon commercial lines, and found that they met with the heartiest welcome. Thus, these simple forms found their way into the greater number of the furnishers' showrooms of any importance up and down the country; and, as they were unusual, comparatively inexpensive, and far superior in construction and design to much that was already there, their popularity became assured.

Of this "Quaint," in its best phases, it may be said that comparative simplicity is the keynote; that, in cultivating



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it, the designer is free to give his own fancies full play, so far as considerations of price, and limitations imposed by method and material, will permit; that in it the value of broad effects in carving, inlay, and metallic enrichment is more fully appreciated than it was before the cultivation of this vein of thought; and that, as a matter of fact, it is, to all intents and purposes, the "New Art" of the British furnisher — a "New Art," withal, which had its inception here long before "L'Art Nouveau" made its appearance in France.

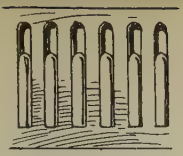
The Arts and Crafts Society, however, must not be permitted to monopolise all the credit for the inception of this new movement; for, even during the earlier years of that organisation, some furniture designers and manufacturers were working quietly towards the same goal, though they were not enrolled under the Morrisean banner, and would, most likely, not have been acknowledged as *confrères* by those who were. Indeed, they are not accorded that honour even yet; but they manage to survive somehow. We must, however, accord the Society all the honour that is its due; and hope that the day may not be far distant when it will throw down many of the barriers it has raised; when its views may be broadened; when many of its absurdities and mannerisms may be abjured; and when it may become more thoroughly representative of British art and craftsmanship than it has been. Then, the good work it has already accomplished may be increased ten thousand-fold.

Although it is not my intention to illustrate much modern British work here, one or two examples demonstrating certain points raised will not be out of place. For instance, we have on Plate I. four pieces of furniture which the "Arts and Crafts" Society deemed worthy of being placed on view at one of their exhibitions at the New Gallery, held not so very long ago, and these will serve to justify some of my remarks with regard to that body's advocacy of severe sim-

plicity. Exactly the same spirit inspired the designs which are presented on pages 322 and 323, and on Plate III.; but it is that spirit interpreted by one who has made a life-long study of the task in hand, and who is, therefore, able to avoid the pitfalls that beset the simple amateur. The last Plate (II.) that calls for notice illustrates a number of suggestions for dining-room furniture in which natural forms, skilfully and tastefully conventionalised, constitute the sole enrichment. This series of studies in what might almost be described as English "New Art," is from the pencil of Mr. Henry Pringuer, an artist in writing of whose work I could, with the greatest enjoyment, fill many pages did circumstances permit, but unfortunately they do not.

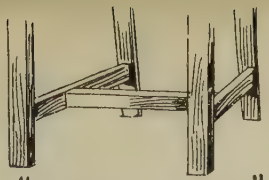
In conclusion, it must be pointed out that, side by side with this cultivation of the "Quaint," designers have studied more and more deeply the best work of the past, learned its lessons, and adapted the cardinal principles of historic styles with such rare skill as to bring them into harmony with present-day requirements. The result has been that, in addition to the faithful copying of old models, the most tasteful novel renderings of old styles have, for many years past, been produced, and continue to be produced, on every hand. To sum up the situation, if I were asked to give my opinion upon the work of the modern British cabinet maker as a whole, I should unhesitatingly affirm that there never was a time in the history of our country when so great a degree of good taste was to be found in the furnishing showrooms as is to be seen there to-day; and that there is not the slightest excuse for anyone, however limited may be his resources, to admit into the home ugliness in the form of furniture.

"FLUTES"



"STOPPED FLUTES"

"REEDING"

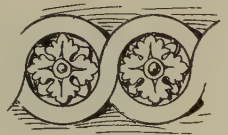


"UNDER FRAMING"

"SPINDLES"

"SWAG"

"EGG-AND-TONGUE" MOULDING



"GUILLOCHE"

"ANTHEMION"

"NULLING"

"PEARL" BEADING

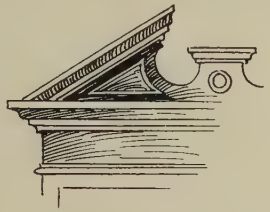
OVAL "FAN"

"SPLAT"

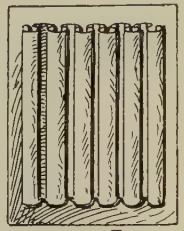
"BAY"

SPANDRIL "FAN"

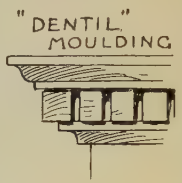
"HUSKS"



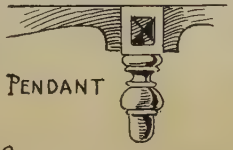
BROKEN PEDIMENT



SIMPLE PARCHMENT OR "LINEN PANEL"



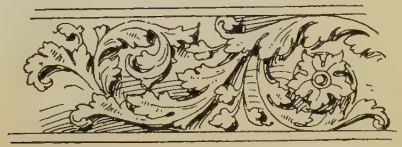
"DENTIL" MOULDING



PENDANT

ACANTHUS MOULDING

ROSETTE OR PATERA



ACANTHUS SCROLL

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Printed by Ballantyne, Hanson & Co.
Edinburgh & London

Y0-BXL-254